



## **Dealing with Grief During the Holidays**

by

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Grief and the emotions that accompany the loss of a loved one is an agonizing experience and during the holidays it can seem like an overwhelming ordeal. Reassessing our attitude toward the holidays, deciding how involved we want to be as well as modifying old traditions or establishing new ones can help minimize the stress and enable us to participate. Here are a few suggestions.

### **Acknowledge Your Feelings**

Give yourself permission to feel whatever it is you're feeling. Don't assume you have to feel or behave a certain way. Tears can be a healthy release.

### **Take care of yourself**

Adequate rest and a healthy diet are important. Know your limit and don't push yourself to do more than you're able. Say no to activities that are more than you can handle. Take time to be alone and rest.

### **Shopping**

If you need to buy gifts, consider shopping online. This allows you to shop at your own pace and choose a time that's best for you without the noise and demands of a busy mall. Gift cards simplify the process even more and most people enjoy receiving them.

### **Decorating**

Limit decorating or skip it altogether. If you want to put up a few ornaments, consider asking a friend or family member that understands your situation to help you.

### **Entertaining**

If you're used to entertaining, you might consider limiting the number of guests and include only close family and/or friends or consider skipping entertaining altogether and accept invitations instead.

### **Sharing Memories**

Invite family and friends to share their memories of your loved one or consider hanging a stocking or having a special box available where guests can drop their comments.

### **Make a Difference**

Helping others can help take the focus off yourself and your pain. Places such as nursing homes, homeless shelters and hospitals welcome volunteers. Helping a friend or family member who's struggling can be just as beneficial.

**Keep in mind....**

You don't have to enjoy or even participate in the festivities. And you certainly don't have to pretend to enjoy them. Just remain open to whatever happens and let it occur naturally.

**Consider writing**

Keeping a daily journal can be a way of getting and staying in touch with your feelings. Write as much or as little as you want. Even a sentence or two will help you stay focused and give you perspective.

Whether you choose to celebrate the holidays in a new way or you choose to forego celebrating altogether, keep in mind that life is filled with new possibilities. Even changes that we didn't invite or want to happen can be opportunities for growing and exploring new avenues that we might not otherwise have considered.

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