



HOLIDAY TIPS FOR GRIEVERS

'Tis the season to be merry but for grievers the holidays are fraught with emotions and decision making may be complicated. There are memories of holidays past and concerns about how to spend the holidays this year. Here are some suggestions for grievers, keeping in mind that different choices can be made again next year:

- * Maintain traditions that feel comforting and let go of those that no longer feel right
For example: if the thought of preparing your typical holiday meal is too overwhelming, take the year off and order in or go to a favorite restaurant instead
- * Create new traditions or meaningful rituals
For example: design or purchase a new holiday decoration that you will hang in memory of your loved one
- * Make a toast in memory of your loved one
Chances are everyone at the table will be aware that the person who died is not there...so why not share sentiments together
- * Remember that it is okay to laugh, cry, sing or dance whenever you feel like it
- * Prepare special foods or bring their favorite dish to a holiday party
- * Allow yourself time alone as well as planning time to be with others
- * Do some volunteer work that would be meaningful to your loved one

Families with children are reminded that the children are grieving too. Far too often children are excluded when decisions are made about which holiday rituals and traditions to continue and when to create new ones. Offer opportunities which will help them maintain their precious memories and engage in joyful, child centered activities that allow them to enjoy still their childhood.

For example:

- * decorate plain paper with holiday themed stamps or stencils and wrap a toy to donate to an emergency shelter or hospital
- * bake holiday cookies to serve to guests or deliver to a retirement community
- * design and laminate a decoration featuring a photo of your loved one

If you are supporting someone who is grieving, here are some suggestions:

- * Understand that people react in different ways. They may want the closeness of friends at times and need space at other times. Invite the person to social events and know that they may change their mind at the last minute.
- * Start the conversation. Use the name of the person who has died and share your memories with them.
- * Make a donation in memory of the person who died.
- * Offer to sit with or just "be" with the person who is grieving while they write letters, wrap presents, or address holiday cards.
- * Know that it helps just to offer a listening ear. You aren't expected to say any magic words that will make them feel "all better."

May this holiday season bring you comfort, strength, peace, and hope.

www.OurHouse-Grief.org

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