

## Facing the Holiday Season During the Pandemic

As if facing the holidays while grieving was not hard enough this year, griever have the added burden of CDC guidelines and restrictions to cope with.

According to the media, the holidays are a joyous time filled with merriment and abundance. Marketing strategists ignore the fact that for many families the economic downturn and layoffs due to the coronavirus have curtailed spending patterns for many families, especially griever already burdened if a bread winner has died.

In addition, limits on travel and co-mingling of households adds to the isolation, loneliness and yearning for the person who died that are the hallmarks of grief and are more pronounced during holiday times.

During this period of heightened emotions, some time-tested strategies for coping might be of some help and comfort:

- 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 take-out*
- 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?*
- Prepare their favorite dish for your holiday meal
- 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*
- Remember that it is okay to laugh, cry, sing or dance whenever you feel like it
- Allow yourself time alone as well as planning time to be with others in your bubble
- Do some volunteer work or make a donation that would be meaningful to your loved one

If you have children, always invite their thoughts when planning how to observe the holidays.

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 in person or via a social media platform 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.
- Donate 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 are not expected to say any magic words that will make them feel “all better.”
- May this holiday season bring you comfort, strength, peace, and hope.