

Getting through the Holidays

Holidays are filled with nostalgia, traditions, celebrations and family. This can be a very painful and stressful time of year for those who have lost a loved one. Here are some ways to manage this pain and get through the season:

Hold a Family Meeting

1. Make a list of all the things you have always done for the holidays. Include traditions, such as:

- send greeting cards
- hang outdoor lights
- holiday baking
- going to parties
- visit friends/family
- holiday outfit
- decorate the house
- decorate tree
- entertaining
- gift exchange
- go to church, temple, synagogue, mosque
- donate to a charity

2. Here are some questions to ask for each task on the list:

- Would the holidays be the holidays without doing this?
- Is this something I really like to do or want to do?
- Is it a one-person job, or can it be a group effort?
- Who is responsible for getting it done?

3. Decide together what is important to each of you to:

Still want to do	Want to let go	Want to do differently

Do Things Differently

Try celebrating the holidays in a completely different way:

- Go to a restaurant.
- Visit relatives and friends.
- Travel to a new place.
- Change decorations.
- Create new traditions.

Do Things Simply

Try celebrating the holidays on a simpler and smaller scale.

More this way...

Take Care of Yourself

Pay attention to your body and:

- Build some time in your day to relax.
- Eat healthy nourishing meals. (If your appetite is poor or low, eat smaller portions more frequently throughout the day.)
- Exercise frequently—even just a walk around the block.
- Avoid drinking alcohol. (This can intensify depression and disrupt sleep.)

Pay Attention to Your Feelings

Feelings demand expression. When we acknowledge them and let them out, they go away. Stuffed feelings that go unexpressed get worse, so:

- Express yourself.
- Ask for what you need.
- Be patient with yourself.

Expect to Feel Some Pain

Expect moments of sadness and pain throughout the season. Identify what holiday activities trigger your grief (a song, decoration, tradition, etc.). Then make a plan for how you will deal with these triggers.

Seek Support from Others

You should not grieve alone. Share your experience with someone who understands your loss. That person may not be in your usual circle of family or friends. You can also join a grief support group.

Give to Others

One of the most healing things you can do for yourself is to be with other people during the holidays. Caring for and giving to others is a way to honor your loved one and may help you feel better. Some options would be to:

- Visit a nursing home.
- Work a soup kitchen.
- Volunteer for a church, temple, synagogue or mosque.
- Get involved in a building/clean-up project.
- Donate to a charity.

From *Finding Your Way Through Grief: A Guide for the First Year* by Marty Tousley, 1999