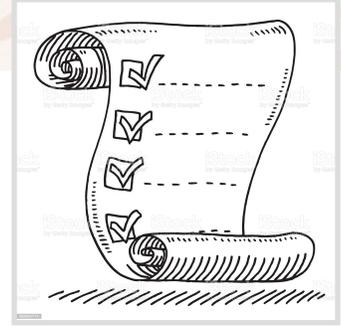




# Planning for a Holiday after a Loss

*It can be helpful to set time aside as a family to talk about your expectations for the holidays. Grief is unique for everyone, so family members might have different ideas as to how they want to spend the holiday season without their loved one.*



- **Questions to consider during the family discussion:** What did this holiday mean to our loved one? What does the holiday mean to us and to our immediate family? What do each of us need to feel supported (hugs, privacy, time with friends) and who can we ask for help? How can we handle our differences in case a family member wants to celebrate differently than the others?
- **Holiday family plan checklist:** After talking through some of the general plans and what has worked in the past, perhaps create a list for each item and choose who will be responsible for tasks you wish to keep or create, and who can be asked for help and support.
- **Food:** What foods do we typically prepare? Who is usually invited to the meal/festivity? What were the favorite foods of our loved one? Who can help prepare the food this year? Do we want to cook at home or go out to eat? What will we bring to parties?
- **Decorations:** Do we want to decorate at all this year? Do we want to make any changes such as using an artificial tree instead of a real one? What were the favorite decorations of our loved one? Do we want to create decorations to honor our special memories such as a dedication corner?
- **Events, parties, and family gatherings:** Where do you want to spend the holiday? Do we want to stay in town or spend the holiday in a different place than last year? If different, what are ideas as to where our family should go? What does the holiday look like once we are there? Do we want to attend our usual parties this year? Will we host a gathering? Do we want to include the memory of our loved one? How will we handle conversations about our loved one?
- **Traditions:** Some traditions to consider are sending cards/newsletters, attending faith or community services, taking a trip or vacation, visiting the cemetery or memorial spot for your loved one. What traditions are connected to our loved one? Which new traditions would we like to create? Do we have realistic expectations? A fun idea might be to have everyone in the family write down a new simple tradition that they would like to try each week or every few days of the holiday winter season. Place in a bowl or special jar and randomly pick a new one to try. Get creative!
- **Gift-giving:** If gift-giving is a tradition, do we want to exchange gifts this year as we normally would or do we want to modify? Give to a charity instead? Perhaps gift certificates/gift cards? Consider “experience” gifts? Make homemade gifts? Adopt a family in-need and buy gifts for them/create a holiday for them?
- **Post-holidays:** What have we traditionally done for New Year’s Eve and Day? What do we normally do during January and February? What did our loved one enjoy doing during this time? Do we want to plan a trip or some other special event for after the holidays?
- **Reflection:** Since you spent time to create a plan for the holiday season, it can be helpful to discuss as a family how things went for each person during the holidays. Talk about what worked, what didn’t work, what you want to do differently next year, and how each family member is feeling now that the holidays are over. It is important to let others know what they did that was especially caring to help you and your family feel supported.