



Ten Tips for the Holidays

Often during times of grief, it can be helpful to have a guide to help ease some of the stresses that can be felt during the holidays. Since the grieving process is unique to every person, choose what tips and tools work for you and your family to help manage the holiday season.

1. Lean In or Lean Out to your Grief

Do what feels right to you. If it feels better to step away from the holidays completely or to downgrade a bit from usual practices, then give yourself the permission to do so. If children are involved, it may be necessary to carry on usual traditions so that the holiday remains fun and joyful to them. There is an entire spectrum of celebration. Do what feels right to your family, not to the expectations of others or society.

2. Lower Expectations

It's ok to not be okay. Likely, your holidays will look differently without your loved one than they have in the past. Remain mindful of what you can handle during this time and let others know that during this time, it is okay that you are not okay.

3. Ask for help

The holidays can require a lot of personal time and energy. Recruit family, friends and neighbors to help ease some of the physical burden that can often be felt at the holidays.

4. Make a Plan

Develop a holiday checklist with specifics as to how you and your family will celebrate the holiday, but remain flexible to change it if needed.

5. Maintain Self-Care

Always remember to take care of yourself. Give yourself a break, surround yourself with a strong support system, and take time to recharge. Remember you have to take care of yourself first so that you can take care of others. Maintain good physical and emotional health as much as you are capable.

6. Evaluate Traditions

Talk as a family about creating new traditions together, or choose to embrace old ones as a way to stay connected to your loved one.

7. Embrace the Memories

Include the memory of your loved one in your celebrations. Encourage your children to make something meaningful, such as a holiday card or special gift, for your loved one. Your children might want to place them in a special place such as a fireplace mantel or in their room. Some children might want to take these items to the cemetery. Perhaps remember your loved one by cooking their favorite food, listening to their favorite songs, and taking part in their favorite holiday traditions.

8. Honor Emotions

Accept and honor expressions of emotion from both yourself and your children. You both may express a wide range of emotion that often can arise at unexpected times. Avoid the tendency to put a positive spin on your loss.

9. Acknowledge Feelings as Natural

Acknowledge all feelings and reassure children that these feelings are expected, honest and natural and to not feel shameful.

10. Give Back

Giving back to others who might be in need can be very therapeutic when you are grieving. Take time to volunteer or donate to a local non-profit in memory of your loved one, serve at a local food pantry or adopt a family in need for the holidays.