

## Grief Takes No Holiday

*“You will not ‘get over’ the loss of a loved one; you will learn to live with it. You will heal and you will rebuild yourself around the loss you have suffered. You will be whole again but you will never be the same. Nor should you be the same, nor would you want to.”* Elisabeth Kübler-Ross



### How can I help myself?

The holidays often magnify feelings of loss, especially for a loved one. During this time be gentle on yourself. Let others know that you might not participate in all the usual festivities. Feel free to change plans at the last minute. Cry if you need to. Try to get enough rest. Here are a few other considerations moving through the holidays.

- **Keep the memory alive.** Create a memorial ornament or decoration. If the person who has died always played a special role in holiday festivities, formally ask another family member to carry on the tradition. Create an online tribute.
- **Start a new tradition.** During a holiday dinner, place a lighted candle on the dinner table, leave an empty chair, or say a few words of remembrance.
- **Change the celebration.** Go out to dinner instead of planning an elaborate meal at home. Or schedule a trip with friends.
- **Set aside sacred time.** Take time to pray and read spiritual texts that you find comforting, attend services, and share your circumstances with your church family.
- **Do something for others.** Volunteer to help others, through your place of worship or a charity. Invite someone who is alone during the holiday to join you and your family for a meal, a religious service, or an activity such as a concert. Make a donation to a favorite cause in memory of the deceased.

A helpful website: [grief.com](http://grief.com)

## Helping Someone Who Is Grieving

Loss of a loved one, loss of a job, a divorce, illness – all these bring grief to our lives. For many people, the hardest time of grieving is during the holidays especially for the loss of loved one. The sadness feels sadder and the loneliness goes deeper so the need for support may be the greatest at holiday times.

- **Let them talk.** Ask about the deceased. Help someone reminisce. Let them share their feelings, and cry.
- **Don't try to make it better.** Statements like “Cheer up,” “It was God's will,” and “You'll get over it” are not helpful. Say, “I love you.” Share your own good memories if it seems appropriate.
- **Hang in there.** Give the gift of your presence. Company can be very helpful during the holidays.
- **Lend a hand.** Offer to do something specific, like chores or errands, even if you are not sure it's the right thing to do. Grieving people may be unable to say what they need.
- **Keep your promises.** Grieving people feel abandoned if you don't follow through on pledges to call, visit, or ask them over.
- **Don't judge or dictate how someone grieves.** People grieve in their own ways, and their shifting needs may be inconsistent. Take your cues from them.
- **Be open to changes.** Someone who is grieving may wish to alter certain traditions or withdraw from full participation. Help them anticipate and be open to changes in traditions.



*“Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.”*

--Romans 12:15

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