

GRIEF

around the holidays

The holiday season is steeped in traditions. Memories of merrier times magnify both the loss and the finality that our loved one will never be part of family photos and other traditions ever again. Painful dilemmas such as how to address the empty Christmas stocking or our loved one's seat at the dinner table play a role as well. Finally, because the holiday season is a busy time and the bereaved begin the season already exhausted, their emotional threshold for holiday overload is much lower.

Grief around the holidays can be very difficult. Someone in mourning may struggle to join in the merriment, be overcome by memories of holidays past, or try to avoid the celebrations altogether.



TIPS TO SUPPORT

those in mourning

- Recognize that you can't fix someone's sorrow. Grief takes years to process.
- Honor the bereaved's choices for how they wish to cope with the holidays. They instinctively know what's best for themselves, even if you don't agree.
- Do not avoid the bereaved. If the griever asks to be left alone, honor their wishes if it is safe to do so. Otherwise, include them in the festivities.
- Resist the urge to fill their calendar with festivities as a way to cheer or distract them. Just like all healing, grieving is exhausting and the bereaved may not have the energy to keep up with all the celebrations.
- If you live or work with the bereaved, their sorrow can quickly deplete your own happiness. Give yourself permission to take time out to enjoy the festivities.
- Expect the bereaved to have cranky moments. Pain in any form can easily overload our emotions (it's human nature). If you're having difficulty finding compassion during one of these moments, take a breather for yourself and go run errands.
- Invite the bereaved to help you volunteer in the community. Serving others less fortunate is a wonderful reminder that everyone faces struggle.
- Help the bereaved find a way to honor their loved one's memory during the holidays.
- Should the griever get caught up in the merriment for a moment, celebrate with them but be patient if it doesn't last long. Over time, precious moments of joy will grow as the rawness softens.