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INTERNATIONAL GRIEF INSTITUTE

# RESILIENCE RX

## Coping with the holidays

### Self care techniques for the bereaved

The science behind why they work and how to implement them after loss



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## THE HOLIDAY BLUES

While friends and neighbors are decking the halls and hanging mistletoe, we're reliving memories of Christmases past. Facing the holidays after losing a loved one is a nostalgic reminder of merrier times and can hark the herald of unending tears.

Allow yourself to try a handful of these tips to guide you through the emotional kaleidoscope. Above all, do what feels best to your heart, and self-gift with big doses of kindness and compassion.

Grief is individual as a snowflake.  
UNKNOWN

### Coping strategies that help

**Tip #1: Stick with a routine.** A familiar routine offers a sense of reassurance that at least one thing in life hasn't changed, and the familiarity can help us feel grounded. But if it feels too painful, then do what feels best to you in that moment.

**Tip #2: Avoid packing the schedule.** Grieving is emotionally exhausting; plenty of rest will help minimize raw nerves.

**Tip #3: Cut yourself some slack,** not your finger. Grieving is naturally distracting. Even the smallest kitchen disaster can quickly deplete coping skills. Buy store-bought when possible.

**Tip #4: Skip the chaos.** Turn off the computer, light a fragrant candle, grab a soft blanket, and binge-watch a good comedy. Take time to create peaceful surroundings to soothe your nerves.

**Tip #5: Treat your senses to TLC.** Each day acknowledge 5 things you can see, 4 things you can feel, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste.

**Tip #6: When the mood strikes.** Give yourself permission to feel joy without guilt. The heart can hold both and it's good for the spirit.

**Tip #7: Honor the past.** Find a way to include your loved one's memory. Hang their stocking and fill it with cat toys or dog treats for the family pet, or pay it forward in your loved one's name.

**Tip #8: Volunteer.** Do something in the community that lifts your spirits. It induces a "helper's high" that's good for both the brain and the heart. It also reminds us we're not alone in our struggles.

**Tip #9: Seek support.** Surround yourself with others who speak your loss language and fully understand how hard the holidays can be.

**TIP #10: Cry.** Give in to the tears. There is no shortage of raw emotions over the holidays, and a good cry can be cleansing and help release emotional buildup.



### 10 TIPS

- ✓ Stick with what feels familiar or give yourself permission to try something new
- ✓ Protect your time to prevent exhaustion
- ✓ Cut yourself some slack and shop online
- ✓ Skip the chaos to avoid frazzled nerves
- ✓ Do what feels best to your heart, not what pleases others
- ✓ Seek support
- ✓ Gift yourself an abundance of compassion and grace
- ✓ Allow yourself to cry
- ✓ Allow yourself respites from the pain and enjoy the festivities without guilt