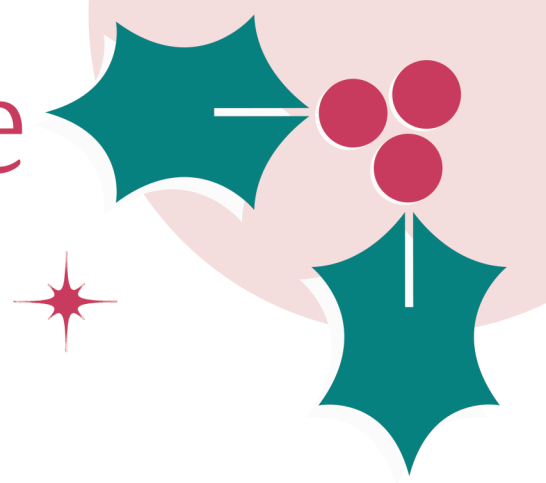




Tips for the Holidays



PLAN AHEAD

Bereaved individuals who experience the most difficulty with the holiday season are those who have given little thought to the challenges they will encounter. Consider ahead of time what may be expected of you, both socially and emotionally, as well as your own preferences.

BUILD IN FLEXIBILITY

Learn to “play it by ear.” There is no concrete formula for learning to deal with loss. You are the foremost authority on what is best for you and your needs may legitimately change from day to day. Accept the fluctuations that must occur when walking in unknown territory, and learn to take each moment as it comes.

INFORM OTHERS OF YOUR NEEDS

Give family and friends the tools they need to help you through the holidays. Be specific with them about your preferences and desires, and keep them up-to-date when those needs change.

ACCEPT YOUR LIMITATIONS

Grief consumes most of your available energy no matter what the season. The holidays place additional demands on your time and emotions. Plan to lower your expectations to accommodate current needs.

TRIM DOWN TO ESSENTIALS

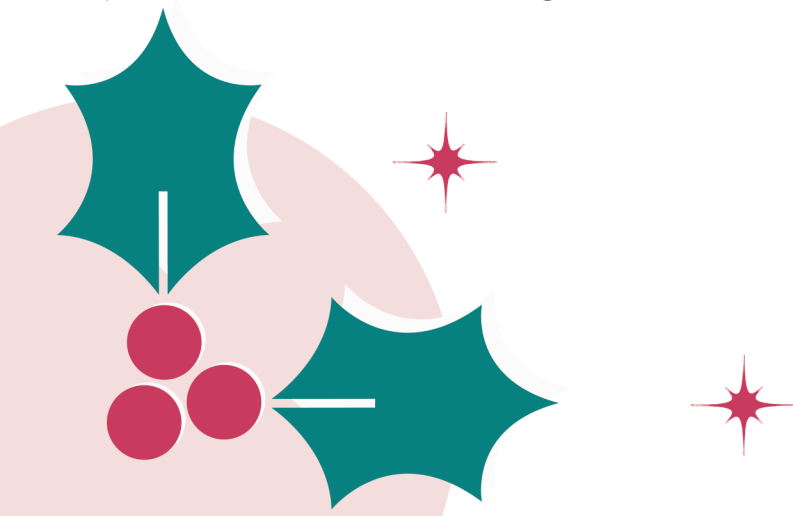
Limit social and family commitments to suit your available energy. Shop early or use catalog sales. Re-evaluate priorities and forego unnecessary activities and obligations.

GIVE YOURSELF PERMISSION "TO BE"

Allow breathing space and expect fluctuations in mood and perspective. The bereaved work overtime. Not only is life more complicated, but all energy is siphoned into mental and emotional resolution. Grieving is nature's way of healing the mind and heart from the greatest injury of all. Allow yourself the privilege of limping till your wounds have healed and you can learn to run again.

MAKE CHANGES

Your circumstances have changed. Expect to make necessary alterations in holiday plans to accommodate those changes. Consider changing your surroundings, rituals, and/or traditions to diminish stress. Serve notice on family and friends that this year things may be somewhat different.



Personal Ceremonies for the Holidays

Because holidays are times of tradition and ceremony, you may want to create special new ceremonies that honor your loss and help you to bridge the gap between the past holidays you shared with your loved one and the future holidays you now face without him/her.

IDEAS TO CONSIDER

- Visiting the cemetery alone or with others to place flowers, pray, write in a journal, or reminisce with friends and family.
- Visiting a place that was specially loved by their loved one.
- Planting a special bush or tree in memory of their loved one.
- Placing a special ornament on the Christmas tree in memory of their loved one.
- Donating money to a charity or cause that has special meaning to their loved one.
- Giving a significant book, piece of jewelry or article of clothing that belonged to their loved one to some special person.
- Lighting a candle to include their loved one in the holiday activities.
- Reminiscing during the holidays about their loved one's life and the holidays they shared together.
- Gathering photographs, mementos, and written memories to make a book of remembrances of experiences shared with their loved one.

SIMPLE, HELPFUL, MEANINGFUL

Holidays are times for sharing and celebrating with friends and relatives. Perhaps your personal ceremonies can help you to celebrate and share the memory of your loved one, as you acknowledge the changes and challenges in your life.

MY PERSONAL/FAMILY CEREMONIES FOR THIS YEAR
