

## Twelve Tips for Coping with the Holidays

by Julie Lockhart

With the holidays coming, many of us who have lost loved ones may feel a sense of dread. Every year I brace myself for what's coming – decorations, songs, good cheer, shopping, and families gatherings. Yikes, if I could hide under the covers until it's over, I would. But I have a daughter. She was six when her Dad died eight years ago, so I have no choice but to face the holidays and make it memorable for my girl. Sometimes we host a big dinner party – I love to fill our home with good friends and laughter. Some years, we travel to someplace warm to get away, just the two of us. We're looking forward to a road trip to Palm Springs this year.

I asked WinterSpring friends for some ideas on getting through the holidays, and here's some of what they offered:

1. *Keep your commitments to a minimum. Give yourself permission to lighten your load.*
2. *We honor our loved one by starting new traditions. For example, we choose a child from a Giving Christmas Tree and help make his/her Christmas that much brighter.*
3. *We do volunteer work for the day of the holiday – serving soup, distributing blankets to the homeless, or visiting a nursing home to sing.*
4. *I made a candle with pictures of my Grandma all around it and we lit it in memory of her. It felt like a little piece of her was there with us.*
5. *I honor my loved one by placing a special ornament on the tree.*
6. *I go easy on myself and buy ready-made pies instead of baking them.*
7. *I traveled quite a lot to other people's homes to celebrate Christmas -- sister's, brother's, daughter's -- so my youngest daughter and I would not be stuck at home alone during the Holidays.*
8. *One year I sent out CDs of my wife's Favorite Christmas Music, another year a CD of all the old family Christmas pictures -- copied by me (many hours of time).*
9. *I sent cards with long, hand-written messages to all the people I loved -- to stay in touch with those important to me.*
10. *I baked Christmas cookies for my siblings and children.*
11. *Every year I make a fairly substantial donation to the Ashland Community Hospital's "Tree With Lights" fundraising campaign, in my wife's name, to help fund the birthing center, and include a notification to my daughters.*
12. *Follow your instincts – Do only as much as you're comfortable with doing. If you don't feel like sending holiday cards, don't. You don't have to do anything you really don't feel like doing.*

May you find peace and be surrounded by love this holiday season.

