

# *Coping with the Holidays*



*Allow yourself time to think about  
and acknowledge your grief  
and realize your holiday may have  
both happy and sad moments.*

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A United Way Agency

## Coping with the Holidays

The holidays can be a vivid reminder of what once was. Sometimes we may feel like we would like to skip November and December, but since we can't, here are some ideas to guide you through the holidays.

Recognize that the holidays may be different and there may be some pain along the way. Establish sensible goals and realistic expectations for the holidays. Be practical about what you can and can not do. Listen to your inner voice and let it be your guide.

When it comes to traditions, decide which ones you want to keep from years past and which ones you want to change. Try switching things around or try something new this year. Don't send cards if you don't want to. Buy baked goods instead of making them from scratch, or omit them all together. Perhaps this year you decide not to put up a tree, but instead use greenery in a center piece.

Balance solitude and sociability. Alone time can renew and strengthen your energy. Being with people can also be energizing and important. Attending a social gathering may surprise you by having a good time. Having fun doesn't mean that you have forgotten your loved one.

Counter the silence of avoidance by breaking the ice and mentioning your loved one. Use his/her name. Tell your family and friends that it's important for you to talk about your loved one during the holiday when he/she is very much on your mind. Express your feelings to those around you in a constructive, open honest way. Start sentences with "I feel" statements.

Acknowledge the absence of your loved one. Do something in memory of him/her, such as lighting a candle, hanging a special ornament on the tree, making a donation in his/her memory, paying tribute to your special someone at family gatherings.

Embrace your memories of holidays past. Keep happy moments close to your heart. Don't be afraid to reminisce about joyful times with your loved one. Memories can never be taken away.



Find caring people who will listen and talk about your grief. Join a support group of people who understand what you are experiencing. Being around caring people can be healing.

Do something for others like volunteering and/or making a donation to a charity that was special to your loved one. Buy toys to donate to needy children. Try to do one thing a day for someone else.

To relieve holiday stress know your spending limit and stick to it. Limit your drinking and consumption of rich sugary foods.

Taking care of yourself should be your #1 priority. Keep yourself as rested and unstressed as possible. Eat well balanced meals. Treat yourself special by listening to music, lighting a candle, buying a holiday bouquet for yourself, reading a good book, going for a walk, calling friends and relatives, taking a bubble bath, visiting the library, museums, art shows, etc., going to a movie or play. Exercise and meditation can renew your energy. Keeping things simple will help relieve your stress.

There is no right or wrong way to deal with the holidays. It can be a time to heal and grow as a person. It can be a time to enrich the spirituality that fits your values and lifestyle. Let the spirit of the season comfort your heart and bring you inner peace.

