

- *Even greetings may seem out of place for you this year.* Think of how you might answer ahead of time. You could simply say “best wishes to you” or “thank you”.
- *Embrace your “Treasure of Memories”* – they are one of the best legacies your loved one leaves behind. Instead of ignoring memories, share them.
- *Do something symbolic.* Think about including rituals that can appropriately symbolize your memory of your loved one. For example, you might light a candle, hang a special ornament. Remembering your loved one in this fashion can be heartfelt and meaningful.



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## Coping with the Holidays



## COPING WITH THE HOLIDAYS

The Holiday Season can be a joyous time for family and friends, but if you have lost someone who played a vital role in your enjoyment of the Season, you may dread seeing it approach. Grief doesn't have to be fresh to be painful. Here are some suggestions that may help to make things a little easier at this time of the year.

- ***Acknowledge that this year will be different.***
- ***Holidays often magnify feelings of loss.*** Allow the tears to come, but look for joy amidst the pain. Be gentle with yourself and don't expect too much. If you cry, don't let that ruin the day for you. It may give others permission to grieve as well, and feel sad, even on a "happy" day.
- ***Become aware of your needs and express them*** to family members and friends with whom you plan to spend the holidays. Encourage others to share their feelings too so that everyone affected by the death of your loved one has the opportunity to express his/her wishes about holiday plans.
- ***Once you have decided*** how your family will handle the holidays, let others know.
- ***There is no right or wrong way to handle the day.*** Some people prefer to follow cherished family traditions, while others decide to change them. Remember, what you choose to do at this time can always be changed again next year.
- ***Get involved only in preparations that you enjoy.*** Allow others to help you. Buy baked goods or let others bake for you. Cut back or eliminate any cards, especially for those you will see during the holidays. If you need to shop, do it early or by telephone and catalogue. Visit relatives or friends, enjoy dinner, try changing the menu, the time, or the room. If it is traditional to decorate do it only if you would like too.
- ***Take care of yourself physically.*** Grieving is hard on the body and is a great source of stress. Eat well and wisely; make time for exercise and rest so that your grief is not compounded by exhaustion or overwork. If you listen well to what your heart and your body is telling you the holidays will pass more peacefully.
- ***Friends and colleagues may expect*** you to participate in holiday parties. If you are invited, don't be afraid to say "I hope you understand that the holidays are difficult and I am trying to take care of myself by not planning too much. May I come at the last minute if I feel I can handle a party that day?" Most people will understand.