

COPING WITH HOLIDAY GRIEF

Compiled by Brenda Spina, M.S., LMFT, LPC

This time of year there is such a dilemma between the need to grieve and the pressure to get into the spirit of the season. Holiday or not, I encourage you to find ways to take care of yourselves. Here are just a few suggestions that may help.

1. Plan ahead as to where and how you will spend your time during the holidays. Let yourself scale back on activities if you want or need to. Redefine your holiday expectations. This is a year of transition where you will be saying good-bye to some rituals and hello to new ones.
2. Select a candle in your loved one's favorite color and scent. Place it in an area of your home and light it at times that are meaningful to you or have it burning all day long. This can signify the love that lives on in your heart for the person who has died.
3. Please give yourself permission to express your feelings. If you feel the urge to cry, let the tears flow. Tears are healing. It is a proven scientific fact that certain chemicals in our tears are natural pain relievers.
4. Shakespeare once said, "Give sorrow words..." Write a letter to your loved one stating what you are honestly feeling toward him or her at this time of year. After you write it you may place it somewhere for safe keeping, leave it at the memorial site or decide to let go of it in some manner symbolically honoring their passing.
5. When you are especially missing your loved one, call a family member or dear friend and share your feelings. If they knew him or her, consider asking them to share some of their memories of that person. This does not have to be long but a way of honoring the process of saying good-bye and remembering what was.
6. If you live within driving distance of the cemetery, decorate the site with a holiday theme. This can include flowers, garlands, ribbons, evergreens, etc. This year in particular may be a time you may allow yourself to remember and cherish the holiday experiences you had with your loved one. It is also a way to cherish the time with your remaining family members.
7. Play music that is comforting and meaningful to you. Allow yourself a few moments to close your eyes and let the music soothe your spirit.
8. Give money you would have spent for gifts for your loved one to a charity

- in their name, buy gifts for a child or person who would normally not receive a gift during the holiday time, or dedicate money to a library or dedicate a book in their name.
9. Read a book or article on grief. One suggestion is “Don’t Take My Grief Away” by Doug Manning. Another is “The Comfort Book For Those Who Mourn” by Anna Trimiew. For those who like C.S. Lewis, read “A Grief Observed”
 10. Remember the reality that the anticipation of the holidays without your loved one is often harder than the actual holiday.

Adapted from “Ten Ways to Cope with Holiday Grief” by L.B. Schultz

Compliments of Practical Family Living, Inc.

P.O. Box 1676, Appleton, WI 54912 (920) 720-8920

You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute our articles in any format provided that you credit the author, no modifications are made, you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, and you include Practical Family Living’s web-site address (<http://www.pfl.org>) on the copied resource. Quotations from any article are also permitted with credit to the author and citing the web-site. Any use of other materials on this web-site, including reproduction, modification, distribution or republication, without the prior written consent of Practical Family Living, Inc., is strictly prohibited.