

Coping with Grief during the Holidays

Significant dates such as holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, or other special events or seasons can bring up many different memories and emotions, especially for those who are grieving. Here are some tips on how you can help take care of yourself and those close to you during the holidays.

Remember, you are the expert on your grief and your family.

- **Acknowledge that the holidays will be different this year**

Different holiday activities, decorations, and foods may remind you of the person who died and how things will be different without them. Acknowledging your feelings about the holidays can give you and your family a chance to think about certain events or days that might be more difficult for you, and to discuss how you can best support each other.

- **Plan ahead**

The anticipation of the day may be more difficult than the day itself. Having a plan ahead of time can help ease some of the anxiety and fear of the unknown. Talk with close family and friends and let them know what you might want or need. Be sure to include the children in your planning, since they are also missing the person who died and may have special holiday activities that would be meaningful to them.

- **Consider what new & old traditions might be meaningful to you**

It may be comforting to participate in holiday traditions you shared with the person who died, but you may also decide you want to take a break from traditions or create new ones. Talk together to see if there are ways to honor your person that feel meaningful to you, such as decorating a special ornament or donating a gift in their memory to charity. You could also make them a part of your holiday gathering by lighting a special candle, taking turns sharing memories, or designating a space where you can place notes, food, and special memory objects or decorations.

- **Be flexible**

While having a plan can help, give yourself permission to change your mind and do what is best for you and your family in the moment. It may help to have back-up plans or to let friends and family know ahead of time that you may need to leave a gathering if you are feeling overwhelmed.

- **Be gentle with yourself**

You have lost an important person in your life, and it is natural for the holiday season to look or feel different to you. Communicate to others what supports are best for you and your family. Many times, people want to show that they care and would be grateful if you let them know how they can help – whether it's shoveling the driveway or inviting your children to an activity and allowing you to have some quiet time alone.

- **There is no right or wrong way to navigate the holidays**

Just as there is no right or wrong way to grieve, there is no right or wrong way for you and your family to approach the holiday season. What works for one person might not work for another, and each family member may grieve in different ways. Remember that you are the expert of your own grief.

1210 Massachusetts Avenue, Arlington, MA 02476
781-641-4741 ♦ info@childrensroom.org

childrensroom.org



The Children's Room

Caring support for grieving children
teens & families

The Children's Room is the leading independent, non-profit organization in Massachusetts dedicated to creating safe, supportive communities so that no child, teen, or family has to grieve alone. We provide support and education to families, professionals, and the community through programs offered at our Arlington center and locations throughout Greater Boston.