

SURVIVING THE HOLIDAYS

The holidays are among the most difficult times for bereaved families. Below are some helpful suggestions that may aid you in “surviving the holidays”.

- ★ **Call a family meeting to discuss your plans for the holiday season**, understanding that it would be unusual for you not to feel emotionally, physically and psychologically drained. Try not to set your expectations too high, or you may find yourself disappointed.
- ★ **There’s no obligation to say “yes”.** Only participate if you truly want to. Well-meaning friends and family members may want to include you in their plans, believing it best for you to “get away” from grieving your loss. They don’t understand that you can’t escape the grief that you feel.
- ★ **Try to take care of your health.** It’s important that you eat and drink properly, exercise and get plenty of rest.
- ★ **Take time to do the things you want to do.** You may want time alone to reflect, or to write your thoughts.
- ★ **Consider eliminating such things as the festive decorations, cooking and baking** that you may normally enjoy. People will understand if you’re not in a merry or joyous mood or simply lack the energy. You may try placing an electric candle in your window in memory of your child. Don’t feel obligated to send holiday cards.
- ★ **If it’s necessary for you to buy gifts, consider ordering them over the Internet or by phone.** Most who are bereaved find it draining to go out and fight through crowded stores bustling with holiday cheer.
- ★ **Many families who are mourning may use the money they would have spent on gifts for their loved one to buy gifts for someone who would be unable to celebrate the holidays otherwise.**
- ★ **To want to include your loved one during the season is not unusual.** You may want to do something like:
 - ♦ Ask friends and relatives who knew your loved one to send a story about them that you may not have known;
 - ♦ Ask friends and relatives to create an ornament or other type of memento that reminds them of your loved one, so that you can place it around the house or on a holiday tree.
 - ♦ If it was your tradition to hang a stocking in your house, do so as a symbolic gesture, even if you don’t fill it like the others . . . consider placing a card or letter to your loved one into the stocking.
- ★ **If you have children who normally celebrate the holidays, consider continuing to do so,** to create some sense of normalcy in the house and so they won’t feel forgotten.
- ★ **Many families find comfort by being with others who have experienced a similar loss.**
- ★ **Be kind to yourself.**
- ★ **It’s okay to cry.**