



HOLIDAYS, ANNIVERSARIES AND OTHER SPECIAL TIMES

Significant events are not limited to the holiday season. The following suggestions for coping may also be relevant at birthdays, anniversaries, Mother's Day, Father's Day, and other momentous times such as reunions, weddings, graduations, etc. Many of the ideas put forth here can be applied at significant moments. The important thing is to plan ahead, care for yourself, and honor your loved one in a way that is meaningful for you.

TAKE THE TIME YOU NEED

There is no schedule for grief. All grieve in their own way, in their own time. Honor yours. Plan time for yourself by putting it on your calendar. This includes things like naps, self care, down time, etc. Set priorities. Do only what is necessary. (i.e. housecleaning, gift giving etc.)

MAKE TIME FOR SELF CARE

During holiday seasons or busy times at work, it's easy to neglect self care. **Block out time for yourself on your calendar first.** Return to childhood pleasures, find a favorite childhood book or movie from your local library. Make room for joy. If you attend a celebration now and then, allow joy to surface and savor it. Recognize that feeling good does not diminish your loved one's memory.

ACKNOWLEDGE THAT IT WILL NOT BE THE SAME

It is very common to try to reconnect with those who have died by trying to hold on to the past. Unfortunately, this creates a tremendous amount of pressure on everyone involved and very often ends up in disappointment. Your efforts would likely be better spent adapting this year than trying to recreate years past. Although this year is different, it can still be meaningful.

BE SELECTIVE ABOUT SOCIAL EVENTS

Give yourself permission to say "No", but don't forget to say "Yes" if it feels right. Give yourself permission to attend one event but not another, arrive late or leave early. People who sincerely care for you will understand that you may have energy for one

event but maybe not another and will support your decisions.

GIFT GIVING

If gift giving is part of the holiday or event, decide ahead of time how you will handle this. Shop online, buy gift certificates or shop by catalogue. Avoid malls or crowded, noisy, hectic, public places. If you want to shop, do it conscientiously. Set a timer of some kind, bring a friend to keep an eye on you or support you. Take time out before or during to have a meal. Do not risk yourself financially. Recognize that the purchase of extravagant gifts will not "make up" for the loss.





SIGNATURE healthcare at home

care where you are

HOLIDAYS, ANNIVERSARIES AND OTHER SPECIAL TIMES (CONTINUED)

CONNECT WITH OTHER GRIEVERS

This provides mutual support and validation and reduces the sense of isolation bereaved persons often experience. Even in a room full of people you can feel very alone. By spending time with others who grieve, you mutually validate each other's experience. You can learn coping skills from each other and seeing people who have survived their loss is a reminder that you can do the same. Support groups are often found at senior centers, hospitals, community centers, churches and many other places. Signature Hospice has a list of grief support groups available, including our own.

These are a few books that may be useful to you in coping with significant moments in the year:

- *How to Go On Living When Someone You Love Dies*, Therese Rando
- *A Year of Magical Thinking*, Joan Didion
- *A Decembered Grief*, Harold Ivan Smith
- *Unplug the Christmas Machine*, Jo Robinson and Jean Coppock-Staeheli

DO SOMETHING COMPLETELY NEW

Go away for the holidays or do something you've always wanted to but never made time for. Change old traditions, but plan ahead. If Dad always carved the turkey, plan ahead who will do the honors this year. Keep it simple. Decorate only as you feel the need, or don't decorate at all. Take a temporary sabbatical. Just because you don't want to have your annual 4th of July party this year doesn't mean you never will again.

REMEMBER YOUR LOVED ONE

- Speak his or her name out loud and encourage others to do the same.
- Make a toast to him or her at the celebratory meal.
- Invite others to share their memories of the deceased person.
- Donate or volunteer in the name of your loved one.
- Visit somewhere special such as the cemetery or someplace meaningful to you and your loved one. Go by yourself or invite a trusted friend.
- Write a "year end" letter to them. Keep it, burn it or otherwise dispose of it.
- Invite others to contribute to the letter if you feel moved to do so.

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