

# Acceptance

## NEWSLETTER

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### Grieving During the Holiday Season

#### **1. With Grief, there is no timetable.**

While some people may openly express their emotions, others may compartmentalize their grief and avoid their emotions. Some people may mourn for years as they experience this hard time, while others may bounce to their new normal rather quickly. However, one thing we do know is that the holidays are often a stark reminder of those no longer present. Know that whatever you're experiencing this holiday season, whether its anger, sadness, joy, relief, or a combination of feelings, is totally normal and to be expected.

#### **2. First holiday after a death of a loved one can be hard**

If this is the first holiday you're going through without your loved one, know that it's completely normal for life to feel like it's been flipped upside down and that everything around you is happening in a blur. Take deep breaths and bring your attention to the present moment as often as you can.

#### **3. Holidays are forever changed**

For many people, the second holiday is much harder because the first holidays were a blur, people cut themselves a break during the first holidays, other people gave them a pass during the first holidays, or people expected to be in a better place the second year. In essence, the second year becomes much more "real."

#### **4. Don't put too many expectations on yourself**

Going into the holidays, it's easy to assume that everything will continue as it always did. These expectations can force us into avoiding our emotions and putting on a front

to get through. Create a holiday schedule with as little or as much activity that allows you to feel what you need to feel. By taking the time to plan ahead, you can set limits and priorities for the holiday season that make sense for you.

#### **5. Express your needs**

Friends and family don't always know what to say or do when others are grieving. The more you can express what you're feeling and what you need with those around you, the more they will understand how they can support you. If you prefer to talk about the loved one you lost and share memories, let friends and family know. If you prefer not to talk about them, that's fine too. The more you share with your loved ones, the more supportive they can be for you. And, if you're running into unsupportive family or friends, remember it is okay to walk away from them in order to put your needs first.

#### **6. Give yourself time**

Whether it's stepping outside to get some air and reflect after dessert, going home early from the family dinner and crying to an old favorite movie, or deciding to stay home this holiday season, know that you have the option to create space for yourself and your grief. As the years go on, you may need less time to yourself to process everything that's going on. However, in the beginning, allow yourself as much time as needed to sit in whatever you're feeling.

#### **7. Talk to friends, family or professional**

If holidays are feeling overwhelming, know that you're not alone. There are grief support groups and workshops all over the country that can be a great resource for you. You can also reach out to your Capital City Hospice Bereavement Coordinator to talk and get more information about local resources.

### **8. Consider new traditions**

If your old family traditions are too much to handle or if you simply want to find a way to honor your loved one this year, consider starting a new tradition. Maybe this year you ask everyone to bring their favorite memory of your loved one to share at the table, dress in pajamas for Christmas eve dinner, or even start the meal with dessert first. Whatever new tradition you think of, know that it's something you can choose to use as a one-time tradition to switch it up this year, or carry it on moving forward in following years.

### **9. You will get through it.**

If you've lost someone important in your life, holidays may be forever changed. This holiday season may not be easy, but you will get through it. And over time, the holidays will adjust to a new normal, just as you will. Grieving is not about getting over it. It is about learning how to live with it, and doing what you can to honor their life and the impact they made on you.

### **Coping with Grief Attacks**

by, Donna Dean, former Bereavement Coordinator with Capital City Hospice

Following the loss of a loved one, you may sometimes feel like you are on an emotional roller coaster. You may be going along with your routine for some time and then suddenly be caught off-guard by a grief attack. Although these are to be expected, they can be painful and may disrupt your day. You can't always predict where and when these will occur, but you can be prepared beforehand to help yourself cope a little better when they do.

Some bereavement specialists and therapists suggest developing a wide range of coping skills for dealing with distress. There are many different kinds of coping skills.

Here are some ideas:

### **1. Things for Comfort-**

Something for your 5 senses

Touch-a stuffed animal, a stress ball, a piece of soft or textured fabric.

Sound-some source of music or chimes, or sounds of nature.

Sight- a special picture, a snowglobe, a child's drawing, or nature.

Taste-peppermint gum, sour candy, or sweet chocolate.

Smell- a scented candle, diffuse lavender oil, lotion.

**2. Distraction**-Something to take your mind away for a bit. Puzzles, poems, adult coloring books, crafts, knitting, journaling.

**3. Something humorous-**

A favorite cartoon, funny greeting card.

A movie or TV show that always makes you laugh.

**4. Meditation and breathing-**

Learn simple breathing techniques.

Utilize meditation applications, such as the Calm app or Insight Timer.

**5. Phone a friend-**

Make a list of people to talk to when in distress.

You can always call the Capital City Hospice Bereavement Office.

### **Notable News**

#### **Save the Date for Bereavement Memorial**

Date: December 7, 2021

Look for an invitation to arrive in early November.