

Health & Wellbeing

December – The festive season



You're not alone – tips for managing grief during the holidays

The holidays, although filled with family, friends and celebration, can be a stressful time of year under usual circumstances. But when you are managing grief, it can be particularly challenging.

It is important to remember that everyone experiences grief differently and that it's a normal, human reaction to the loss of a person. It is common and reasonable to experience anxiety, stress, sadness, regret, anger or isolation as part of the grieving process.



This holiday season, take the time to acknowledge any grief in your life and use these tips to support yourself and loved ones:

- **Acknowledge**

Acknowledge that the holidays will be different and they may be emotionally difficult.

- **Remember**

Remember those you have lost. It is important to acknowledge that a friend or loved one is struggling. Encourage memories and value the explorations of friendship they bring. Perhaps, pull out old photo albums and spend some time in the holidays looking at photos.

- **Communicate**

Active listening from friends and family is an important step to helping someone coping with grief or overwhelming feelings of loss as well as taking advantage of fleeting time.

Be honest - tell people what you do want to do for the holidays and what you do not want to do. Listen to yourself, trust yourself, communicate with your family, and do what works for you.

- **Traditions**

Decide which traditions you want to keep. Decide which traditions you want to change. Maybe create a new tradition in memory of your loved one.

- **Make a List**

Grief makes it harder for us to concentrate and remember things. When you have a lot going on at the holidays, make a list even if you aren't usually a list-maker, and write things on the calendar to help keep you organised and less stressed.

- **Help**

It's okay to admit you are struggling with your grief. Most people find that with the support of their family and friends and their own resources, they gradually find ways to learn to live with their loss and do not need to seek professional help. However, if you are finding it difficult to manage on a day-to-day basis, it may be helpful to see a counsellor or other health professional.

Say YES to people who want to help and may offer their support. Take them up on their offers.

- **Practice Self Care**

Make efforts towards mindfulness, healthy lifestyle and stress management – this is very personal and different for each person. For some it may be meditating for 15 minutes every morning or going for a brisk walk and for others getting a massage is helpful.

- **Be Flexible**

Be understanding and supportive if someone wants to do things differently this holiday season. Remember that not everyone will be grieving the same way you are grieving. Some people find strength in long established traditions while others may choose to avoid customs of the past and do something new. It's okay to do things differently.

- ***Hustle and Bustle***

Don't feel guilty about skipping events if you are in holiday overload. If you need to take some time to yourself instead of attending events, make sure you let the organiser know that you're not feeling up to it and make an effort to see them when you're feeling better.

- ***Get 20 minutes of sunlight and fresh air***

Stop and smell the roses. Some people find that the smell of flowers, pine trees or just fresh air can decrease stress and increase relaxation.

- ***It's okay to be happy***

Finding happiness and enjoying the holidays does not diminish how much you love and miss the person who isn't there this holiday. Don't feel guilty for the joy you do find this holiday season.

- ***Follow-up after the holidays to check in***

Given the activity of the season, some people may make it through the holidays without any issues but they might find the post-holiday period to be more difficult. So remember that these tips can be helpful year round.



Services available during the holiday season

- Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement: 1800 642 066
- Beyond Blue: 1300 224 636 – <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/who-can-assist>
- Carers Australia: 1800 242 636
- Government social worker: 132 850
- Lifeline (24/7): 13 11 14
- Kids Helpline (24/7): 1800 55 1800
- Parentline: 1300 30 1300
- Mensline (24/7): 1300 78 99 78
- Sids and Kids Bereavement Support Line for parents who have lost a child (24/7): 1300 308 30