

# Coping with the Holidays

When you are mourning, no magic trick can make the holidays feel better. Each person has suffered a different loss, and each must navigate his or her own path through this difficult time. Here are some ideas that others have found helpful:

- **Adjust your expectations.** The holidays won't be the same, no matter what you do. Accept this up front to avoid disappointment.
- **Decide what you can handle this year and tell others.** Discuss and negotiate holiday plans with other family members who are struggling with loss.
- **Keep some traditions; start some new ones.** Consider changing the location of your celebration, or letting someone else do the cooking. Open gifts as a different time or set up the tree in a different part of the house.
- **Ask for help.** Let someone take over the tasks you're dreading, such as cooking dinner for a large holiday gathering.
- **Find someone to listen.** Share your feelings with family and friends. Join a support group. Speak with the member of the clergy.
- **Make time for exercise.** It helps ease depression.
- **Prioritize.** Don't let endless chores add to your stress.
- **Spend time enjoying nature.**
- **Meditate or pray.**
- **Use music as a mood-lifter.**
- **Include your loved one in celebration.** Burn a special candle, hang a stocking, listen to favorite carols or look at photographs.
- **Invite others to share their memories of the person who has died.**
- **Buy a gift for your loved one, then donate it to charity.** Or buy yourself a gift from the person you have lost.
- **Help someone else.** Visit a nursing home or help with a toy drive.
- **Plan to spend the holidays with people you enjoy.**
- **Allow people to comfort you.**
- **Try to get enough rest.**
- **Shop sensibly and keep control on your spending.** Money can't buy a happy holiday.
- **Allow room for laughter and joy** – they're not disrespectful.
- **Don't be afraid to cry.** It can be a relief.
- **Spend some quiet time alone, thinking.**
- **Remind yourself that it won't be as awful as you think.** Many bereaved people say the anticipation is worse than the actual holiday. You can survive this!

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*Article originally written by Sara Steffens and published in the San Jose Mercury News 1995.*

*This resource shared by our own Shamli Hospice volunteer, Angie Ballie courtesy of Hospice East Bay Grief Support Group.*

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**Grief Support Group**  
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*Also available online at [www.rcms-healthcare.org/support-groups](http://www.rcms-healthcare.org/support-groups)*