



Getting Through the Holidays



The pressures around the holidays can be even more challenging after the death of a child, sibling, or grandchild. Here are some tips to consider that may help as you navigate the challenges.

1. **Plan ahead.** Anxiety and anticipation leading up to the season can be more intense than the actual holidays. Planning ahead can help lower anxiety. Once you've decided what you can and can't do, share your decisions with friends and family.
2. **Don't let other people determine what you "should" (or "shouldn't") do.** You don't have to do what others think you should. Give yourselves the right to do what you want to do!
3. **Accept limitations.** You may not be able to do all the things you've always done. Which aspects of the holidays are especially challenging for you or your family? Consider scaling back or changing things you may have done in the past, and consider what has been or might be especially enjoyable or meaningful to your family.
4. **Celebrate different feelings and preferences.** Involve family members in discussions about what they would like to do. You and your family may decide to keep everything the same or change everything – or you may fall somewhere in between.
5. **Be informed before attending events.** Find out who will be there, how long it's expected to last, and whether you need to do anything to prepare for it. As a family, brainstorm ways to respond to questions or offers of help from others.
6. **Ask for help, even when it's hard to do.** If it feels right, allow people to help in concrete ways such as cleaning, cooking, baking, shopping, childcare, and running errands. Sometimes we worry about burdening others, but more often than not, they are eager to help.
7. **Find time for rest.** The holidays can be physically and emotionally draining, especially if you're grieving. Encourage rest and plan for healthy eating and hydration for the entire family.
8. **Find ways to remember and honor your loved one.** Here are some ideas to consider:
 - Light a memorial candle. Invite family/friends to share memories.
 - Write a card or letter to the person who died.
 - Write memories on strips of paper and use them to create a paper chain.
 - Hang a special decoration in memory of him/her, such as a wreath or stocking. If a stocking is used, family members can place cards or pieces of paper with memories inside.
 - Buy a gift he/she would have liked and donate it to a charity.
 - Gift-wrap a box and make an opening in the top for family and friends to share written memories. At a special time, the box can be unwrapped and the memories shared.
 - Set a special memorial place at the table during a holiday meal.
 - Create a memorabilia table or corner where you can place photos, stuffed animals, toys, cards, foods, and any other kinds of mementos.
 - Share one of your loved one's favorite foods or meals. Food can be a great spark for sharing memories.