



The Companion

Grieving the loss of a loved one is difficult in and of itself; but, it can be especially challenging during the holiday season. Whatever holiday traditions you have previously celebrated, you may feel at a loss of what to do now that someone is missing from your physical presence. The changing seasons, family gatherings and special events can be painful reminders; however, they can also be comforting to you as well. Comfort can come from rituals, even if you need to modify those rituals or scale them back to what you can handle. Whether you just want to have an intimate gathering where you spend time with family and close friends focusing on memories, there is still the opportunity to find a sense of joy.

Here are some ways to help you find peace during your grief over these next couple of holiday months (taken in part from Grief.net).

- 1. DECIDE WHAT YOU CAN HANDLE AND BE SURE TO COMMUNICATE IT.** Here is where you ask yourself, “Can I handle the responsibility of the family dinner, etc.?” You decide, “Do I want to talk about my loved one or not?” or “Shall I stay home for the holidays, or do I go to a completely different environment?”
- 2. MAKE SOME CHANGES IF THEY FEEL COMFORTABLE FOR YOU.** Open presents Christmas Eve instead of Christmas morning. Vary the timing of gift giving. Have dinner at a different time or place. Let the children take over decorating the house, the tree, baking and food preparation, etc. Only do what you think you can handle.
- 3. CONSIDER DOING SOMETHING SPECIAL FOR SOMEONE ELSE.** Donate a gift in the memory of your loved one. Donate money you would have spent on your loved one as a gift to charity. Adopt a needy family for the holidays. Invite a guest (foreign student, senior citizen) to share festivities.
- 4. RECOGNIZE YOUR LOVED ONE'S PRESENCE IN THE FAMILY.** Burn a special candle to quietly include your loved one. Hang a stocking for your loved one in which people can put notes with their thoughts or feelings. Listen to music especially liked by them. Look at photographs. Hang a special ornament in their honor.
- 5. OBSERVE THE HOLIDAYS IN WAYS WHICH ARE COMFORTABLE FOR YOU.** There is no right or wrong way of handling holidays. Once you've decided how to observe the time, let others know.
- 6. MAKE IT A POINT TO GET ENOUGH REST.** Holidays can be both emotionally and physically draining; and it's okay to ask for help, talk to someone, see your doctor, and/or take medication as needed.
- 7. ALLOW YOURSELF TO EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS.** Holidays often magnify feelings of loss. It is natural to feel sadness. Share concerns, apprehensions, feelings with a friend. The need for support is often greater during holidays.
- 8. KEEP IN MIND, THE EXPERIENCE OF MANY BEREAVED PERSONS IS THAT THEY DO COME TO ENJOY HOLIDAYS AGAIN.** There will be other holidays to celebrate; but, don't forget about other family members, especially children, who need to continue to feel special and loved.
- 9. DON'T BE AFRAID TO HAVE FUN.** Laughter and joy are not disrespectful. Give yourself and your family members permission to celebrate and take pleasure in the holidays.



People to Remember:

Birthdays

Robbie - Nov. 16th
Scott - Nov. 24th

Eternal Rest

Artem - Nov. 2nd Jeremy - Dec. 18th
Scott - Nov. 21st Leroy - Dec. 26th
Jerry - Nov. 24th

WE OFFER SUPPORT

General support meetings:
1st & 3rd Thursday of the month

LGBT support meetings:
2nd Thursday of the month

Sibling support meetings:
4th Thursday of the month

**Support groups meet
from 6:00-8:00 p.m. at
211 E. Franklin Street
Appleton, WI**

Remember, you are not alone. Celebrate the person, their life and their love and find their presence in the changing of the season, in the holiday spirit, and most of all in you.

UPCOMING EVENTS

International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day Program on Thursday, Dec. 6th at 6:00 (During our scheduled Support Group meeting)

Winter Solstice–Candlelight Night: Dec. 20th at Support Group meeting