



Grief and the Holidays

People who are bereaved often wonder how they will get through the holiday season. This time of year is often full of memories and very poignant, especially in the first year without your loved one. Many people find that with planning, even though the holidays are not the same, they can be manageable, and with time, enjoyable again.

Remember that there is no "right" or "wrong" way to celebrate the holidays after a death, and that what works for one person may not work for another. Trust your own judgment and do what works best for you.

Here are some ideas that we have found helpful here at Hospice SLO County:

- Acknowledge that your holiday traditions may have to change. This may be difficult, but it may also give you a chance to try new ways to honor your loved one's memory.
- Remember that it's not just "calendar" holidays that may have an emotional pull. Special occasions may include anniversaries, birthdays, and other days with meaning to you.
- If you can, have a "Plan A" and a "Plan B". Plan A may be being with family and friends, Plan B may be being home with a photo album.
- You may want to consider driving yourself to events so you can leave early if you feel the need.
- If you will be celebrating the holiday with others, it may be best to confer with them and see how they feel about the holiday and what changes they want or don't want to make.
- Think of which traditions you want to keep, which you want to eliminate, and which you want to modify. Will someone take on the things your loved one did, or will those things be replaced by something else?
- Don't take on extra stress. Where it's possible to, ask for help. Let drop what you can. If possible, take quiet time to relax, as the holidays are often stressful.
- You may consider a ritual that is meaningful to you to help you remember your loved one. It may be as simple as lighting a candle. Or you might volunteer time or donate to a cause in your loved one's name.

Finally, keep in mind that any decision you make this year isn't permanent. You can change your mind and do it all differently next year depending on how you feel.