



*It is the nature
of grace always
to fill spaces that
have been empty.*

– Goethe

The holidays, even the mere anticipation of them, can be overwhelming when you have lost someone. A time of year that once meant connection and celebration may now represent the worst of your grief.

You may be feeling the weight of holiday expectations: from well-meaning friends or family or yourself. This pressure, and society's exhortations to buy, give, decorate and celebrate, can hit like icy snowballs, sending you into retreat.

What's the answer? Should you take a pass on the holidays? Find a nice warm cave to call home through Jan 2nd?

While hiding away for two months may seem like a good idea, we'd like to offer some alternative suggestions. With a little help, a little preparation and a lot of letting go, you can make it through the holiday season.

Will it be difficult? Likely. Will it be different? Yes, but it can also be meaningful.

Holiday Survival Tips Adapted from "Healing Your Holiday Grief" by Alan Wolfelt, Ph.D.

- Don't assume your holidays will be miserable this year.
- Be compassionate and gentle with yourself.
- Be prepared for tough questions, and push yourself to answer them honestly. Then, allow yourself to feel whatever you are feeling, whether that means excusing yourself or crying in front of someone.
- Plan what you will do, whether completely different (like traveling to the Caribbean) or similar to what you've done in the past.
- Plan to have time alone.
- Communicate with your friends and family about what you may need during this time (i.e. to talk/ not talk, host/not host or to opt out of decorating, cooking or baking).
- Reassess your priorities.
- Make a memory display.
- If you accept an invitation, have an escape plan if it feels too overwhelming to be there and someone supportive close by once you leave.
- Simplify gift-giving, and consider not giving gifts at all if it feels obligatory.
- Make handmade gifts in honor of the person who died.
- Start a new holiday tradition.
- Remember that it's good to laugh, and taking breaks from your grief is essential.
- Reach out to others for help, or just for companionship.
- Drink lots of water.
- Eliminate any unnecessary stress from your schedule.
- Remember that mourning is a spiritual journey, and find ways to mourn that are meaningful to you.
- Believe in a better next year.
- Remember that it's OK to laugh, and that laughter is healing.