

Grief and the Holidays



While the holidays are a fun and special time for many, they are also a time of reflection about the year and of people we have lost. Holidays are particularly difficult for those grieving the loss of a loved one, as holidays bring up fond memories of time spent with the deceased.

Even if you are not a person grieving the loss of a loved one this holiday season, the tips for surviving the holidays below may assist you in understanding the needs of those struggling this time of year.

Tip #1 Allow yourself to grieve

Just because it is the holiday season doesn't mean the grief just goes away, although we wish it did! Don't ignore your feelings of grief and allow yourself to talk about your missing loved one(s) and reflect on your time with this person. You don't owe anyone an explanation for your feelings and are entitled to experience your grief. Just

remember, your loved one would want you to be happy and enjoy the holiday season so don't allow your grief to stop you from doing all the things you would typically do.

Tip #2 Spend time helping others

While I mentioned in tip #1 that it is important to allow yourself to grieve during the holidays, it is also important to find ways to distract yourself and set grief to the side when possible. Volunteering and reaching out to other people a great way to do this! Christmas is an excellent time to consider donating or volunteering to help those in need and let's face it, helping someone else is a great way to help yourself. If volunteering at a shelter or donating goods is not for you, consider reaching out to a friend or family member or helping out a neighbor. It is a great distraction and may offer you a sense of purpose this holiday season if that is something you are lacking.

Tip #3 Don't stop your usual routine this time of year

While it may seem impossible to continue through the holidays as you have always done without your loved one, not participating in your usual routine this holiday will not stop the season from coming. Christmas and New Years will come whether you celebrate them or not. Consider decorating as you have always done, bake the cookies, hang the lights, and sing the songs. You may find doing these things actually brings you a sense of comfort, not heartache. Your loved one is always with you and would want you to find some sense of peace and happiness this holiday season...after all, Christmas comes but once a year!

Tip #4 Consider starting a new tradition

If keeping things exactly the same as you and your loved one have done every year before seems too difficult, consider adding a new tradition or altering an existing one. There is no harm in changing things up this Christmas as you can always change them back in the future. Do what you need to do to get through the holiday season! If you are concerned about letting others down by changing your Christmas traditions, talk to your loved ones and explain your need for a change. It's okay if they find it difficult to understand. Everyone grieves differently and requires different things to help them cope.

To summarize, your Christmas this year may not look the same as it has before if you are grieving the loss of a loved one. Even if you have been grieving the loss of a loved one for some time, Christmas can be a difficult time of year for many, as it causes us to reflect on memories of the person we have lost. Christmas will come whether we celebrate it or not, so might as well try and find joy in the season one way or another. Reach out to friends and relatives...you are not alone in this.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

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