

COPING THROUGH THE *holidays*

Grief doesn't stay neatly tucked into convenient spaces. It bubbles up in unexpected moments and surfaces at times meant for celebration; seasons marked for festivity and thanks.

- Lisa Appelo

This time of year calls for family gatherings and celebrations, but you may not feel like participating. Here are some helpful suggestions for you and your family provided by the Resolve Through Sharing program:

BE KIND TO YOURSELF

Focus on what you want to do. Grief can be physically exhausting; respect what your body is telling you. Get the rest, nourishment, and comfort you need.

EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS

The only way through grief is to feel it, not deny it. Cry if you need to, and share your feelings with people who understand.

SHARE WHAT YOU NEED

Don't follow other people's holiday plans if they don't feel right. Ask for help with planning, shopping, entertaining, or just getting through the holidays, if that's what you need.

BE WITH THOSE WHO COMFORT YOU

Share your pain to ease your pain. Identify people who can accept how you are feeling, and if your family is hurting too much, find others to help.

ELIMINATE UNNECESSARY STRESS

Don't over-extend yourself. Keeping busy only increases stress and postpones working through your grief. Lower your expectations for the holidays.

RAISE THE MEMORY

Include your child's name in conversation and share your memories. They may bring both sadness and joy, but those memories were made in love and should be treasured. Some families incorporate their child's memory into new holiday rituals such as: taking family portraits holding a photograph of the child, leaving a place for them at the table during family meals, emphasizing the child's favorite aspects of the holidays, etc.

PLAN AHEAD

You may choose to celebrate as usual, recognizing that family traditions cannot be the same. Or you may choose to avoid the holidays, go somewhere else, and not celebrate at all. Other ideas are to create new traditions, go to a different relative's home, eat out, or have a reunion away from home.

Don't feel guilty about having a good time.

It doesn't mean you've forgotten.