

## Self-Care Strategies to Get You Through The Holidays

- Set Boundaries on your Expectations:** Grieving takes a lot of energy – set limits on what you can and cannot do during the holidays – explain to your family and friends what you are capable of doing this year and what you are not up to doing – don't let others pressure you or talk you into doing more than what you can handle.
- Have a meeting or discussion with family and friends before the holidays:** Share your needs and wants – say “no” to extras – minimize stress.
- Observe the day in a way that has meaning for you:** Let the day be an opportunity to nurture yourself, provide comfort and care for yourself - let it be a day of healing this will help you cope with the roller coaster of emotions that the holidays can bring.
- Honor your emotional life:** Be honest with your feelings – tell others how you feel – do not anesthetize your pain with alcohol or drugs, alcohol is a depressant – do not numb your emotions as this can lead to more depression – **prepare before hand** – your emotions may surface at any time.
- Be flexible:** The best made plans can be broken – **be friendly to yourself.**
- Socialize:** Do not isolate yourself – you do not have to accept all holiday invitations but do attend a select few that mean the most to you and stay for a short time – invite a friend to a movie or to dinner or to help decorate the house – reach out to other friends or acquaintances who may be alone this holiday season.
- Recreate or change traditions:** You may want to break from the past activities or start something new – it may be too painful to remember or participate in some past family traditions.
- Bring the special touches of your loved one to the holidays:** Hang a stocking for the deceased – place their favorite ornament on the tree – place a past photo Christmas Card or other picture out to display – do something meaningful to you.

**Buy a gift for yourself or buy a gift in memory of your deceased loved one:**

Simple gifts can be significant – remember how your loved one contributed in life – one suggestion is a gift of a photo album of the deceased to give to a family member or close friend.

**Get some sunshine:**

Open up the shades in your office or home – buy a sunlight.

**Get up and Move:**

Exercise produces natural stress reducers – take care of your physical well-being – eat healthy foods to provide strength – eat regular meals – stay hydrated – get regular medical care – get enough sleep.

**Shop on-line:**

Shop on-line or use catalogs – let your friends help out with shopping – give gift cards or make donations in honor of recipients this year – keep it simple.

**Decorating:**

If hanging old ornaments or Christmas stockings is too painful, put them aside for another time.

**Connect to the Spiritual:**

Read a book about hope – go to a place that lifts you out of yourself – pray or meditate – light a candle – do something that is significant to you – reflect – spend time in nature – spend time with children.

**Have a plan for the holidays:**

You don't have to follow through with your plans, however, have something in place where you can be with supportive people or if you choose be alone on the holidays – have available phone numbers of people you can call if you feel the need – **be kind to yourself.**

**Lower your Expectations:**

Remember that holiday movies and songs with happy endings can be unrealistic – accept that this time of year can be very difficult even outside of loss – remind yourself that this is a season and it too shall pass – often anticipation of the actual day is worse than the actual day – try to do what helps you the most – hold onto your hope – do what you have to do.

**Remember:**

Your deceased loved one.