



'Tis the Season...

Holidays can bring bittersweet remembrances. Anyone who has experienced the death of a loved one may have mixed feelings during these special days of togetherness, sharing and joy. For a grieving person, holidays can bring sadness, loss, a sense of regret and even a measure of guilt for feeling apart from the merriment.

Love lives in memory. Love for the one who has died lasts long after death. Fond memories of past celebrations may bring back strong feelings of loss that have softened during daily routine life. People around you may urge you to enjoy the season. At the same time the sights, songs and special events all bring back memories of your loved one and shared moments from the past. Here are nine tips on how to handle holiday grief:

- **Don't push yourself.** Feelings of loss can cause you to be tired. It may be very natural to slow down a bit this year. Listen to your body and your needs. Take the holidays at your own pace. Find special time for yourself and don't try to "keep busy." Take a nap, drink lots of water, eat healthy foods, sit in silence and take care of body.
- **Tell some people what you're going through.** Notice your feelings of grief. Don't be timid about expressing yourself to people around you. Usually, talking about grief will make you feel better.
- **Speak of the one who has died.** If you speak the name of the loved one you're missing, others will know that your special person was a very important part of your holiday experience.
- **Let your memories bring joy and sadness.** Your memories are treasures of love. Let them live in laughter and tears. Those special moments were made for you to keep.
- **Be with people who care about you.** Find those relatives and friends who realize that holidays are hard for you. Spend time with people who will let you just be yourself, people who value your sad and happy expressions, and people who are more likely to listen than give advice.
- **Plan for activities that you want to do.** Consider what you want during the holidays. Share your needs ahead of time so that friends and family will know what you want to do. Be open to change if you feel the need. Suggest changes to traditions that will help you and your family remember and grow.
- **Take time to look forward.** Grief at holidays naturally leads us to think of where we are, where we were and what we want the future to be like. Use this special time to notice the good things in life around you and imagine how your life can be next year.
- **Reflect spiritually.** At holidays we may find a greater expression of faith or discover changing personal beliefs. Spend time with people who honor your need to talk about spiritual love. It is a time of year to enjoy special holiday services and rituals, but you need to choose what best meets your needs this year.
- **Remember, your grief belongs to you.** Grief comes with giving and getting love. Now is a time to love yourself, and be close to people who care about you and love you for who you are, not for what you do. Tell them that remembering is part of your healing and growing. There's no wrong way to grieve. Allow yourself expressions of your grief and your love during the holidays.