

Coping with Grief

During the Holidays

As the seasons change, we know that the holidays aren't far away.

The holidays will be different without your loved one(s). While holidays are known for their spirit of joy and celebration, it may be difficult for you to participate this year. Your feelings of grief and loss may feel out of place amidst the laughter and good cheer often associated with the holidays. Even if your loss was in the distant past, you might still experience a sense of longing for them and wish they were still with you.

Planning ahead in anticipation of the holiday season may make it easier to cope. Sometimes it helps to understand that the holidays will be different; this allows you to set realistic expectations of yourself and others. **It's important to remember that avoiding holidays and celebrations will not stop your grief.** Acknowledging and understanding how these changes may impact you may help relieve some of the stress. It can also be helpful to give yourself permission to experience positive feelings as they arise. These feelings may include gratitude for what you shared with your loved one, an on-going sense of connection with them, and the ever-lasting memories.



For more information about our Big Bend Hospice Bereavement Program,
CALL (850) 878-5310 OR VISIT BIGBENDHOSPICE.ORG

Proudly supporting the Big Bend region with compassion for over 40 years.

At Big Bend Hospice, holiday grief isn't something you face alone.
We're here to offer support when you need it.



**Big Bend
Hospice**

We Inspire Hope

Holiday Suggestions for **Coping with Grief**

- **Stay flexible and ask others to do the same.**
- **Communicate your needs or plans with others.**
- **Create a new tradition** that memorializes your loved one. Some ideas include offering a toast in their honor, lighting a candle, planting a tree, or putting up decorations with their name or picture on it.
- **Shop for gifts early and online.** If possible, enlist the help of a friend or family member to pick up items.
- **Donate gifts to charity** in your loved one's memory.
- **Consider how you would like to spend the holidays.**
 - Are there gatherings or events you would like to attend?
 - Would you like to spend the holidays with friends and family or without others?
- **Consider volunteering.** Whether it's serving food at a soup kitchen, spending time with animals at a local animal shelter, or visiting nursing homes and hospitals, studies have shown that giving back to others increases self-esteem, life satisfaction, and mood.
- **Know your limits.** Do not feel pressured to host or attend a gathering if you do not feel ready or up for it.
- **Limit your intake of alcohol.** Alcohol is a depressant, which means it slows vital functions and lowers the amount of serotonin, a chemical that helps to regulate mood, produced in your brain, which can cause you to feel more down.
- **Talk with trusted others about your feelings.** Keeping it all inside will do more harm than good. It's ok to tell people that it's a difficult time of year. Don't be afraid to ask for support.
- **Practice good self-care.** Try to get enough rest, eat well, exercise, and do enjoyable activities. Remind yourself to take a nice, deep breath every so often to help reduce stress.
- **Ask for help** if you need it.
- **Attend grief counseling or a grief support session.** These can sometimes be arranged at your church, with a counselor, or through Big Bend Hospice.
- **Write it down:** Writing can be a safe way to express your thoughts and feelings. You can also write a letter (*or even a postcard*) to your loved one.



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