

Managing Grief during the Holidays

The holidays are a busy time, full of joyful gatherings of family and friends, a time of reflection and fond memories. But for those who have experienced the death of a loved one, the holidays can seem much more daunting, especially stressful and lonely. For those affected by the recent hurricanes that devastated much of the south, this holiday season may present an even greater sense of loss.

While it may be a struggle, there are things that can be done to ease the grief and make coping less difficult. The National Funeral Directors Association offers the following suggestions for the bereaved to help them better cope with the holiday season:

Take care of yourself, both physically and mentally. Don't be afraid to set limits. The holiday season is busy enough that it can exhaust anyone, but if you are shouldering an extra burden of grief, it only makes it more unappealing. Get enough sleep, eat well, and take time out for yourself. Think about what family traditions you want to take part in, and what may be too much, and don't be afraid to say no to activities that may overwhelm you.

Share your memories with others. Speaking about your loved ones and sharing remembrances can often help alleviate some of the pain of the season. If it helps, take part in a memorial or remembrance service at your local place of worship or family funeral home. Spending time with others who understand what you're going through is often a great source of comfort.

Above all, do what's right for you. Your family and friends care about you, and will likely offer advice about what they think is best for the grieving process. Don't forget to do what feels most comfortable for *you*. If volunteering at a local hospital or food pantry helps you heal, then seek out opportunities in the community. If stepping back from a more active role in your family's celebratory activities is the best way, let them know. It is perfectly natural to need time and space to honor your feelings, and the memory of your loved one. But don't forget to seek out your family and friends for support. You are not alone.