

## Coping with the Christmas Season



### *Tips for People who are Bereaved*

It's natural for friends and family to be concerned. If possible, accept holiday invitations. Being with friends and family during the grieving process may be helpful. It can be a reminder that although a loved one has died, there are caring people that can be a support during a difficult time.

If you are not up for holiday socialising, consider doing something different such as a change of scenery or an activity that doesn't centre around holiday celebrations. If things get to be too much, remember that there are friends and grief support groups to reach out to. Most importantly, do what feels right.

### **How to Help Someone Coping with Christmas Grief**

Do you know of someone having a hard time this holiday season due to the death of a family member, friend or pet? Are you looking for a way to help but not sure what to do? Little things really do count.

Holidays and anniversaries are two of the most difficult holidays that a person grieving the death of a loved one has to deal with. Even years afterwards, these events can dredge up feelings so strong, that it can seem as if the death was very recent. What is the best way to offer support to a grieving person during the holiday celebrations?

#### ***Grief is Unique to the Individual***

First, one must understand that all people grieve differently and at their own pace. Some people may want to talk about it, while others may choose to keep things bottled up. Some may act like nothing has happened, while others may remain emotional and become upset easily. All of these responses are normal for the individual who has experienced the loss of a loved one. Recognise that they are hurting, but don't try to push them too fast.

When extending a holiday invitation to the person who is bereaved, don't pressure them to accept. As part of the grieving process they may have made other arrangements or just not be up for socialising. Let them know that they are still welcome to attend if they change their mind. Simply knowing that they have options can be a comfort to them.

If the individual chooses to stay at home, give them a call on the holiday and extend greetings. Ask if they need anything or offer to bring over a plate of food if the person lives alone. Make the offer, but don't force the issue or intrude on the person's privacy. Many people who are grieving can find comfort in being by themselves on the holidays.

If the invitation is accepted, keep the festivities light, but don't sidestep the topic if it happens to come up. Acknowledge the loss and share a happy memory of the person who has died.

