

The Three C's of Coping

The holidays can be a difficult time for those who grieve. Acknowledging this may help us to accept our reactions and tap into ways that make it easier to manage.

During the holidays it is easy to drift into activities that increase our pain. But we do have **CHOICES**. We can decide what activities we wish to participate in, who we want to be with and what we want to do.

It is important to talk about our choices with those who are affected by them. Their ways of dealing with grief may be different, so **COMMUNICATION** is important for all concerned. For example, have a family discussion about whether or not a tree is wanted this year.

By communicating, we create space for **COMPROMISE** and allow everyone to deal with loss in their own way.

Nothing changes the fact that the holidays can be hard. But as we choose our actions, communicate our choices and find ways to compromise, we may find that the season becomes bearable. This can give us renewed strength and hope.

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Helping Children Cope with the Holidays

- ❄️ Talk to the kids about how the holidays are different now.
- ❄️ Ask them what they want and what they don't want. It is best to know ahead of time what is going to happen rather than approach the day without a plan.
- ❄️ Get their ideas about a gift or donation in memory of your loved one.
- ❄️ Involve the children in traditions, memory making and new rituals.
- ❄️ Some children need a break from the family and may want to spend time with friends. Let them know that it's okay to play and enjoy the holiday season.

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When the Holidays Hurt



Tips for Coping with the Holidays

Practice self-care

Give yourself permission to not live up to other people's expectations.

It's *okay* to say no.

Do only as much as you can comfortably manage.

Choose what is best for you and your family, whether it is to be with people or to spend time alone.

It's okay to ask for help

People may want to help but might not know what to do.

Be specific and tell them what you need.

Create support

Sharing your pain and loss may help to ease it.

Try to find people in your life that are willing to listen and support you through it.

It's different now

You may choose to keep your holiday traditions intact or avoid celebrating altogether. It's up to you.

Consider creating a meaningful ritual that honours the person.

Everyone grieves differently

Follow your heart and feelings when it comes to grieving.

Through tears or laughter, honour whatever feelings you have.

Avoid additional stressors

Even when not facing grief, the holidays can bring added stress.

Consider what is reasonable and give yourself permission to cut out what isn't.

*Adapted from North Coast Journal 2003;
"When the Holidays Hurt" and "Surviving
Holidays, Birthdays and Anniversaries"
by Brook Noel*

Ideas for Capturing Memories

Talk about the person and your grief. Share your memories and find supportive people to listen.

When you are with family and friends, encourage them to **share their favourite memories** of the person close to you.

Play **music** that is meaningful to you or the person close to you.

Create a **memory book** either on your own or with family and friends.

Make a **collage**. Through collage, rubber stamping, pictures and paper decorations, you can create a beautiful remembrance.

Create a **memory tree**. Everyone can make or buy an ornament in the person's memory to decorate the tree.

