

# Five Suggestions to Help You Cope with the Holidays

**Allow for Rest:** The holidays can be physically and emotionally draining whether or not you have lost a loved one recently. Grief is also tiring. Naps, walks, quiet times and other forms of relaxation, even for a short stretch of time, can be revitalizing. Children benefit from rest during their bereavement, especially during holidays or other special days.

**Accept Your Limitations:** Grief can be all consuming. Holidays place additional stress and demands on our lives. You may not be able to do all the things you've done in the past. Lower your expectations and allow yourself time and space to grieve. When you simplify your holiday, you also reduce stress for you and your family.

**Ask for Help If You Need It:** Often friends and family are looking for ways to be helpful to you during the hard times. The more specific you can be (shopping, cleaning, cooking, baking, etc.) the more likely it will be that they help out. You may have people in mind. Ask them. They will probably be glad to lend a hand. If you want to continue certain traditions, but feel you can't do it alone, involve others.

**Plan Ahead:** Use the Checklist as a planning tool. Determine the extent to which you would like to celebrate the holidays and what assistance you need. Share your thoughts with your family, especially your children. Together you can plan for the holidays in a way which is consistent with your needs and circumstances.

**Acknowledge the life of the person who died:** For many, connecting with loved ones during the holidays is what they yearn, but do not know how. Friends and family may have ideas of how to bring that individual's particular spirit to the holiday. Popular ways of including a loved one in a holiday are: to toast their loved one and share stories about them, contribute to a local charity in their memory or develop a new tradition that somehow incorporates a core piece of their identity.

Healing Hearts, UHR's Family Bereavement Program is based on the work of the Dougy Center. The above suggestions are based on materials on the Dougy Center website

<http://dougy.org/grief-resources/help-for-the-holidays/>



When time matters most

11 Stokum Lane  
New City, NY 10956  
845-634-4974

[bereavement@hospiceofrockland.org](mailto:bereavement@hospiceofrockland.org)

# Coping With the Holidays Checklist

Adapted from Helen Fitzgerald, American Hospice Foundation

There is no right or wrong way to "handle" a holiday. Some may wish to keep family traditions while others choose to modify or change them. Everyone grieves differently. Honor yourself and your grieving. Have a peaceful holiday.

HIGHLIGHT what feels right this year. Consider sharing your choices with your Family and friends. Be respectful of other's opinions. Agree to forgive yourself and/or others if things don't turn out as you had hoped.

## Holiday Cards

Mail as usual

Shorten your list

Skip this year

Write a Holiday Letter

## Decorations

Decorate as usual

Ask for help

Make changes, i.e. artificial tree in lieu of a real one

Let others do it

Choose not to put up decorations

Have a special decoration for your loved one

## Holiday Dinner

Prepare as usual

Go out for dinner

Eat alone

Change time of dinner, change location of dinner, eat in a different room

Change routine/ menu, such as a buffet/dessert only

Invite friends or others who may not have somewhere to go

Ask for help

## Shopping

Shop as usual

Give cash

Ask for help

Shop early

Make your gifts

Give baked goods

Shop with a friend

Do not exchange gifts now, but later

Ask for help wrapping gifts

Make a list of gifts before shopping. Decide if you want to get or make something in your loved one's memory

## New Years

Spend as usual

Go out of town

Avoid New Year's parties

Attend a New Year's party

Hold a New year's party

Spend time with only a few friends

Go to a movie

Go to bed early

Write in a journal your hopes for the new year

## Holiday Music

Enjoy as usual

Avoid radio music

Shop before stores play holiday music

## Traditions

Keep the old traditions

Spend quiet time alone

Buy/Bake the usual holiday foods

Bake, but modify what you usually do

Attend a religious service

Attend a totally different place of worship

Do not attend a religious service

Visit the cemetery

Don't attend holiday parties

Attend parties but plan to leave early

Go to an entirely new place

Open gifts on the usual day