

Coping with Loss and Grief During Seasons of Celebration

1. Prioritizing and planning:

Make a list of what you would like to accomplish, do, or not do during the holidays. Sit down with your family, and allow each person to discuss what would be helpful to him or her. Each person needs to be specific with his or her preferences and desires. Allow everyone plenty of leeway as each one will be dealing with different emotions. Be creative; give yourself and your family members permission to do something out of the ordinary when it comes to family celebrations or traditions. Regarding holiday tasks and responsibilities that you usually take care of, ask yourself, "Is this something someone else can do?" (This planning activity can include friends.)

2. Accept your limitations:

Grief consumes your energy no matter what the season. Holidays place additional demands on time and emotions. Expect fluctuations in your mood and perspective. Lower your expectations to accommodate your current needs. Flexibility is the key word during this time. Your needs will change, so keep loved ones, friends and church family aware of what you're thinking and feeling.

3. Accommodate changes that came with your circumstances, and find ways to decrease your stress:

Consider changing your surroundings or your traditions to decrease your stress. Be honest with family and friends and let them know things might be different this year. Limit social, family, and church commitments to your existing energy level. Shop early, use catalogs, or shop online. Look at the priorities you listed in number one and reevaluate them. Leave out unnecessary activities or obligations that you've either placed on yourself or that others may want to place on you.

4. Ask for and accept help:

Accept offers of assistance with holidays—shopping, decorating, cleaning, cooking, etc. Your loved ones and friends may be looking for ways to come alongside you and lessen your pain. Allow them to support you in concrete ways. Let them do or help with the thing you would like to see done, yet have no energy to do.

Bottom line, there is no "formula" for dealing with grief or loss over the holidays that will make everything better. You are walking in an unknown territory, but God promises His children that He will never leave nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5b). Learn all you can from what you are called upon to endure so that in time you can come alongside someone else and comfort that person with the comfort you were given (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

To learn more about the topics shared in this article, take time to read the following Scriptures:

Faith: Hebrews 11:1; Colossians 1:23, **Comfort:** 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, **Courage:** Isaiah 41:10, **Memory:** Philippians 1:3; Psalm 111:4, **Love:** Romans 8:37-39, **Hope:** Psalm 71:14; Romans 5:1-5

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