

Advice from "This Thing Called Grief" by Thomas Ellis

Special Dates & Holiday Planning

- Plan ahead. Determine what you need to make these times less stressful. Which supportive & understanding people will you hang out with? Are you most comfortable at home or away? Schedule activities that you want to keep the same this year. Give yourself permission to limit your commitments, & avoid unimportant obligations.
- Communicate your wishes to others. You might wish to call a family meeting to plan the special event. This can be a time of sharing your thoughts & feelings with others & giving your loved ones an opportunity to share their ideas, too. Use this forum to begin delegating specific tasks & traditions that continue to be important for you & your family.
- Acknowledge your limitations. This is a time to be gentle & kind to yourself. Be aware that less is more & simpler is better. Set aside time to be still & to rest. Plan activities that nurture you and others physically, emotionally, & spirituality. Lower your expectations of yourself and others, and embrace this new place in your life.
- Acknowledge your loss & grief. This can be a time to plan a new activity or ritual in memory of your loved one. Hang a special stocking, light a special candle, hang a memorial wreath, or decorate a tree with symbols of your loved one. Know that it is all right to express your thoughts & feelings at this special time of grieving. Nothing can make you or your family sadder, so release your tears & grief.
- Embrace the memories & create new traditions. It is helpful & healing to say the name of the one you love. Share pictures & stories. Laugh & cry. Tell your story in your holiday greetings. Consider a holiday donation with the money you might have spent on your loved one. Some find it helpful to visit the cemetery & place a special object there. Consider adopting a family in need, giving a memorial gift, or extending a special holiday invitation.
- Evaluate your shopping plan. Decide whether shopping in a decorated store or mall will be too difficult. Shop before the explosion of décor & music begins, or consider shopping by mail. Establish your priorities according to your level of energy.
- Accept help from others. Remember that grief demands your attention & requires a great deal of time & energy. Asking others for help may be your greatest gift to them. This provides opportunities for others to become involved & allows you to take time for yourself. Inquire about the support available through your faith community, and be open to the idea of grief support groups or therapy.