



## **ARE YOU GRIEVING FOR A LOVED ONE THIS CHRISTMAS?** **SUGGESTIONS TO MAKE THE HOLIDAYS EASIER**

With Christmas upon us, it is important that we take care of ourselves. Christmas is not the happiest of times for everyone and many people feel more alone and the symptoms of grief may get worse. Here are some suggestions to get through the holidays that may be helpful:

1. Allow yourself to feel your emotions, whatever they are. Don't feel that you have to just get over it. You may want to write your feelings down in a journal or draw them on a paper. Take time for reflection and take time to remember your loved one.
2. Call a friend, or relative, to spend some time with you. Make sure that the person you spend time with is a good listener. You may feel like getting out of the house, going out for dinner.
3. Take time to share memories with the family/friends of the loved one who died. You can light a candle in honor of him/her; set out a picture and tell stories about him/her; watch a home video together; look through a photo album together or make a family memory book.
4. Plan ahead to help you set limits and do what is meaningful for you and your family during the holidays. You may want to ask yourself:
  - Is this something I do out of habit or do I really enjoy it?
  - Can I share the job with someone else? (example: Decorating the home can be taken on by an older child, perhaps a niece or nephew, you don't have to do everything yourself)
  - Who will take over the role traditionally assigned to the person who died? (Example: carving the turkey or ham)
  - Can someone else do my gift shopping or wrapping?
  - Do I want to exchange gifts at Christmas with my friends and relatives or is there another day that may be easier (i.e. Thanksgiving or Easter)
  - Can someone else help with the housecleaning or could I even afford to have someone come in and clean the house?
  - Can I send out cards at another time of the year to celebrate another holiday or occasion.
  - Work on things gradually, giving yourself lots of time to get things done. Do not place unrealistic expectations on yourself.
5. Try the following cooking ideas over the holidays:
  - Reduce the number of dishes you make
  - Ask your guests to bring a dish to share
  - go to someone else's house for dinner or attend the Community Christmas Dinner
6. Be open to good experiences that the holidays may bring. Live in the present. Remember, past holidays weren't perfect either.
7. Don't avoid long-standing traditions. Children often find comfort in them. On the other hand, new traditions say you are still a family.
8. Provide your children with extra amounts of attention, praise, and emotional support.
9. Children imitate behavior. If they see you are crying and expressing your sadness at the death of your loved one, they will know they have the freedom to do the same.
10. Do something for someone else. Reaching out to someone else who is in need can help with your feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. Give a donation in memory of your loved one. Give food to the needy. Invite someone else who is alone to join in the holiday meal and festivities.
11. Allow yourself to feel joy. You are not betraying your loved one.
12. Get outside and enjoy some fresh air. Get some exercise to alleviate some stress. It may be important to be conscious of your alcohol intake as it can make you feel worse. **ALL IN ALL TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, BE AS KIND AND PATIENT WITH YOURSELF AS YOU WOULD BE TO THOSE AROUND YOU!**

**Courtesy of the HOPE North Suicide Prevention Committee**  
**November 2018**