

HOLIDAY SUGGESTIONS

The holidays are difficult for all who have lost a loved one to suicide, but especially poignant for the survivor who is newly bereaved. We remember happier holidays spent with all family members present. As the years go by, the sadness becomes less overwhelming but it lingers. Usually, there is joy to be found but one must make a conscious effort to find it.

Most survivors have found it helps to have a holiday plan and to change some of the family traditions. Here are some suggestions from experienced survivors who found them helpful.

- Take care of yourself; eat right: schedule some time for exercise and get plenty of sleep.
- Do your holiday shopping early to eliminate unnecessary stress.
- Decide what you can handle comfortably, let those needs be known to family, & friends
- If you find things aren't going well, set limitations and do only the things that are most important to you.
- Plan your holidays ahead of time. Having a schedule of known activities relieves some of the tension.
- Don't hesitate to make changes in your holiday tradition: it can make things less painful.
- Start a new tradition - one as simple as discarding an old recipe and trying a new one, the time you open your presents, time of the holiday meal, etc.
- Plan to be with people you enjoy.
- Buy yourself something special.
- If you feel the need to cry, remember tears are an honest expression of love & emotion.
- Some have found comfort in spending the holidays away from home.
- If the thought of sending holiday cards is too painful, give yourself permission not to send them.
- If you feel uncomfortable about one Christmas stocking being missing, don't hang any or substitute something else to fill.
- Many have found comfort in doing something for others; give a gift in memory of your loved one to your favorite charity, invite a senior citizen, foreign student or guest to share your festivities, etc.
- Include the deceased in your conversations with family and friends when you discuss past holidays. Some survivors have experienced disappointment when their loved one was excluded from holiday conversations. Having a discussion with your family beforehand helps to avoid this situation and additional grief.

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