

# Coping with Grief During the Holiday

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1. Acknowledge and accept feelings about the loss of a loved one and remember that others in the family are grieving too. These are natural responses to death.
2. If times do get too emotional, take time out to talk about your feelings with a loved one, friend or clergy. Sometimes other people can offer reassuring support and care needed to overcome your feelings.
3. View this holiday season as a time to “Reclaim Life.” Concentrate on the joy of past memories and on building new traditions, reunions, and friendships.
4. Be sure to discuss with your family and friends about how you plan to spend the holidays. It’s okay to turn down invitations to events or activities you don’t feel like attending. Don’t feel obligated.
5. On the other hand, don’t shelter yourself from your family and friends. People who are away from their family and friends may find their own sense of isolation and loneliness intensified by the joy and happiness that others seem to be feeling.
6. Remember that it’s okay to have fun. You don’t have to feel guilty for feeling happy or joyful during the holiday season.
7. Don’t be afraid to make changes, it can really make things less painful. Take time to create new traditions with your family. If you always opened presents on Christmas Eve, open them on Christmas Day this year. Send gifts certificates this year instead of presents. Decorate less to minimize holiday stress.
8. Help others. Your greatest comfort may come in doing something for others like donating time, energy or money to a charity, nursing home, hospital, or children group.
9. Most importantly, take care of yourself. Eat properly, exercise, and get plenty of rest. Avoid excessive use of alcohol and try not to over eat which can lead to depression.
10. Plan something for January or February to lesson the post-holiday letdown and as a reward to yourself for getting through the holiday season.

For additional information, contact your local Outreach and Extension Center or the MU Extension Rural Safety and Health Program at 1.800.995.8503.

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