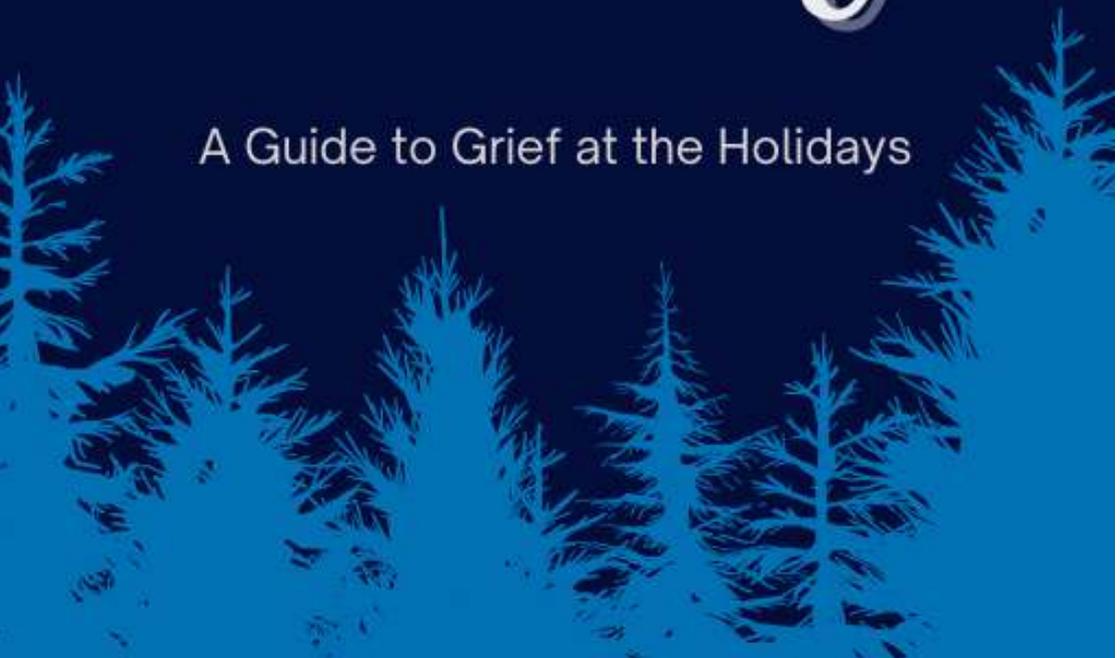


Blue



Holidays

A Guide to Grief at the Holidays



© 2022 by CoachRev *@the CrossRoads*

All rights reserved. No part of this booklet may be reproduced without prior permission.

CoachRev *@the CrossRoads* can be reached by emailing our founder at Lee@CoachRev.com.

Dial 988 (National Crisis Hotline) if you are in crisis.

Introduction

Any day can be hard when we are grieving. Whether our spouse, child, or beloved pet has died, or we've lost our home, our job, our dreams, or anything else that matters deeply, grief often changes us.

Holiday joy! Ringing sleighbells! Family gatherings! Cheerfully wrapped gifts! Delicious dinners! The holidays are a time of excitement and celebration, right?

No. While many people look forward to the holidays, they can also be a struggle for people who are grieving. It's like a totally new landscape that has no map. Thanksgiving, Winter Solstice, Kwanza, Christmas, Hanukkah, New Year's Eve all create an expectation of joy and holiday cheer that feel out of reach. What used to be a time of excitement becomes a time of thinking about what you've lost.

If your loss is recent, experiencing these special days for the first time is overwhelming. Even for people whose loss is more distant find that holidays are still hard.

It is normal to feel more intense grief during holidays. It's ok if you don't feel the joy of the season. Do what feels right for you; grieve in your own time and your own way.

We at CoachRev *@the* CrossRoads hope this booklet will help you find peace through the holiday season.

Going through the “Firsts” can be one of the most difficult parts of grief. If you’re wondering how to survive the holidays after loss, here are some strategies you may find helpful.

Remember that Time Doesn’t Heal All Wounds

Grief doesn’t just go away after a short time. Others will say, “You should be over it by now” or “Cheer up! There’s so much to enjoy!” Remember that grief doesn’t fit into a nice tidy box that can be tucked away on a shelf. It is a healing process that takes time and can’t be avoided. It’s ok to feel the sadness, anger, guilt, and yes, even laughter without judging yourself or thinking you *should be* happy or *shouldn’t be* laughing. Allowing yourself to experience this whirlwind of feelings can actually help you feel better in the long run.

Plan Ahead

Holidays are often filled with traditions and gatherings of friends and family. Know that special moments of past holidays with your loved one are going to come to mind. Maybe he was always the one to carve the turkey, or she made a special dish that only she could do. Perhaps there was a particular part of the day that he or she loved best. Take time to consider what things will have changed. Once you become aware of these, they won’t have quite the same power to knock you off kilter.

Think about what may be expected of you and what your hopes are for this season. Reflect on what traditions you want to continue and what you’d like to change or add. Remember that what you do this year can be changed next year if you wish.

Know That It's OK to Say No

Grief is exhausting – physically and emotionally – no matter what time of year. The holidays add even more stress and demand on your time and energy. Taking care of your needs is crucial. You don't have to force yourself to be at every holiday event or gathering. Don't let others pressure you to participate. You don't have to try to please everyone else. Respect what your body and mind are telling you and be realistic in the expectations you hold for yourself.

Be Kind to Yourself

You tend to run helter-skelter to get all the shopping, cooking, and cleaning done. Chocolates, cakes, and cookies were on the restricted list. You made sure to answer every invitation with a visit or call. This year give yourself permission to slow down, to say no to the invitations, even to eat those delectable goodies that give you some bit of comfort. Be gentle with yourself. Look for things that you are grateful for – even the small things in each day. Feel all the feels that come up. If you feel sadness, feel sadness. If you feel angry, feel angry. If you feel joyful, feel joyful. Take each moment as it comes and remember to breathe!

Honor Your Loved One

Creating a special way to remember who or what has died can serve as a tangible reminder that love never will. You might choose to light a candle and sit in quiet reflection; or watch a movie you both loved. Maybe finding a special decoration can be a yearly reminder of the treasured times together.

Focus on What You Can Control

There are so many things we have no control over during the holidays. The blaring Christmas music in just about every store you enter. The “Merry” and “Happy” and “Be of Good Cheer” wishes that come your way. Friends, family, and co-workers talking excitedly about their holiday plans. While you can’t control these, there are some things you can control. Be aware of your limitations and don’t overextend. Don’t send cards this year if you don’t want to. Decorate only as much or as little as you want. Only go to events that matter to you and take your own car so that you’re not stuck staying any later than you want to. Re-evaluate your to-do list and let go of unnecessary activities and obligations. Keeping busy with the hopes of keeping grief at bay will likely backfire causing more stress in the long run. It’s ok to step back from the many demands of the season.

Create New Traditions

Many people love traditions, especially holiday traditions. But they also bring a lot of memories and a lot of grief. Creating something new doesn’t mean you’re leaving your loved one behind or forgetting the traditions you both shared. Don’t be afraid to do something new. New traditions or rituals are an opportunity to create lasting ways to honor your loved one.

The following are only some ideas. There may be others that better reflect who your loved one was and the legacy you wish to carry on.

- Place a wreath at your loved one's gravesite.
- Choose a candle or flower to be placed at the table as a remembrance.
- Make a loved one's favorite meal
- Place written memories in a box to be shared when the family is together

Ask for Help

Don't be afraid to reach out to a trusted friend or family member and let them know you're struggling. Just letting someone know that you're having a hard time can be enough. But you may also want to reach out for something more. Finding a support group, or a Blue Christmas Service to attend, or contacting a grief coach can help you deal with your grief in a healthy way. As you grieve during the holidays, well-meaning friends and family may try to tell you what they feel is in your best interest. It is important to focus on what is best for you. As you become aware of your needs, share them with friends and family. Be specific with them about your preferences and desires and let them know if those needs change.

It is important to identify friends and family who encourage you to be yourself and accept your feelings, both happy and sad, without judgement. Be open to expressing your feelings of grief as sharing your feelings may help lessen the pain. Oftentimes, loved ones are looking for ways to provide their support. Allowing those who care about you to assist with holiday shopping, decorating, cleaning, cooking, etc. may lessen your feelings of loneliness and may even be enjoyable.

If you found this information helpful, please share it with your friends and family.

For information about “**Navigating the Whitewaters of Grief**” drop-in virtual support group, click [here](#).

Join our Facebook group [here](#).

Download the [CoachRev app](#) by scanning the QR code below.



If you would like to talk to Lee or schedule a complimentary grief coaching session, email Lee@CoachRev.com

*Wishing you peace on the journey,
Lee*