


A lit candle in a dark setting, with the title 'Grief During the Holidays' overlaid in white text.

Grief During the Holidays

Lisa McMorro

The image features three lit glass lanterns of varying sizes and designs. Two smaller, round glass lanterns with black perforated metal tops are in the foreground on the left. A larger, more ornate lantern with a black top and a glass body is on the right. The lanterns are lit, casting a warm, yellow glow. They are placed on a dark surface covered with scattered autumn leaves. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting an outdoor setting at night.

As We Begin...

What is Grief?

Grief is the normal and natural response to any change or loss experienced.



What is grief?



Grief is both universal and personal.

Grief is sometimes a strong and overwhelming emotion.

How Does Grief Affect us?

Physically

Emotionally

Cognitively

Spiritually

Socially

Behaviourally



Physically

Digestive Problems

Driving Ability

Energy Loss

Illness

Shortness of Breath

Heaviness in Limbs

Neck Pain

Back Pain

Chills or Night Sweats

Weight gain/Weight loss

Fatigue

Dry Mouth

Trembling or shaking

Tightness in throat or chest

Increased allergy symptoms

Nervousness

Headaches or Migraines

Heart Pain

Sleeping too much or too little

Emotionally

Panic and Anxiety

Guilt

Initial Shock

Bitterness

Anger

Relief

Numbness

Sadness

Fear

Heartbreak



Mentally

Confusion

Disbelief

Dreams/Nightmares of the
deceased

Preoccupation with the deceased

Loss of Concentration

Mental Fog

Memory Impairment

Difficulty making decisions

Spiritually

Anger at God

Questioning Faith or Spirituality

Growing in Faith or Spirituality

Changes in religious or spiritual
practices

Questioning the meaning of
suffering, death or the disease

View the world differently before
the death

Behaviourally

Social Withdrawal

Changes in activity level or commitments

Avoidance of places or reminders of deceased

Focus on reminders of the deceased

Inability to concentrate- may go over and over the death of the deceased

Disturbed sleep or nightmares

Socially

Withdrawal

Isolation from Others

Potential conflict with others over differences in grieving styles

Unrealistic expectations of others or others unrealistic expectations of you.

Ways to Honour Your Grief

Self-Care While Grieving During the Holidays

Listening to Your Body

If you need to cry - cry

If you need to sleep – sleep

Give yourself a break if needed.

Lower your Expectations of yourself- can't expect to be at full capacity. Give yourself rest when you need it.

Maintaining some sort of eating and sleeping schedule will help in the midst of your grief - even if you focus on one small action.

Consider making time for activity or movement - a leisurely walk may be healing while grieving.

TIPS FOR COPING WITH *Holiday Grief*



Decide how
you want
to spend
the holiday

Plan
your
activities
in advance

Expect
things
to be
different

Take time
to care
for
yourself

Be
flexible
about
holiday
traditions

Give
to
others

Do something
to remember
your loved
one

Self-Care During the Holidays



Plan Ahead

Be gentle with yourself



Make Changes

Trim Down to Essentials

Build in Flexibility

Accept Your Limitations

Give Yourself Permission to just 'be'

Ask for and Accept Help



Let others know what you need from them: Communicate to family and friends how they can support you.

Inform others of your needs.

Others often don't know how to help – let them know.

Reach Out to Others

Get all the support you need.

- Bereavement groups
- Individual Therapy
- Family Physician
- Read books or watch videos about Grief

If you have feelings of **hopelessness** or **suicidal thoughts**

- go to your nearest Emergency Room or call **9-1-1**
- Call The Distress Line – Edmonton

780-482-(HELP) 4357

Youth - Crisis text line (Kids Help Phone)

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Personal Time

Take the time to do the things you need to do for yourself:

When you feel up to it, engage in activities to which you enjoy.

- Visit a place you haven't been to in awhile, read, journaling, etc.

Pamper yourself: Treat yourself well. Do things for yourself that are helpful like being with people who are nurturing to you, time alone where you can be intentionally kind to yourself. Notice your needs and act accordingly.



Grieving at Christmas

4 CRUCIAL SELF-CARE TIPS

1. BE AWARE OF YOUR FEELINGS

Understand that grief might resurface during the holidays & that's normal.

2. BE OKAY WITH SAYING 'NO'

Don't overwhelm yourself with social obligations - be okay with saying 'no' to things.

3. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

The holidays throw us off our routines - try to stay on top of sleep, eating and exercise as these things can affect us when we are already feeling down.

4. ASK FOR SUPPORT

If you're struggling, don't be afraid to reach out to family and friends for support.

Helpful Tip #1 For Getting Through The Holidays When You Are Grieving Or Alone...

Plan Ahead: Spend some time figuring out how to help yourself during this time. Come up with restorative routines to help with your stress, fatigue or anxiety, such as reading or napping and schedule them on the calendar. Figure out what basics are going to get you through the holidays and make them a priority.





Coping with Grief during the Holidays

1. Find ways to remember
2. Make time for yourself
3. Give yourself permission to
say "no"
4. Change some traditions
5. Do something for others
6. Express your feelings



YOUR HOLIDAY GRIEF



SURVIVAL GUIDE

HOW TO GET THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS WHEN YOU'RE GRIEVING

1. LET YOURSELF SAY 'NO'

Above all else, you need to take care of yourself. If you're feeling sad & not up for going to that holiday party - give yourself permission to say no! Stay home, watch a movie and take care of yourself.

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2. IT'S OKAY TO LEAVE EARLY

You might feel like you're up for a social gathering until you get there and realize "I am not okay being here". That's okay! Give yourself permission to go home early - your friends will understand.



3. ALWAYS HAVE AN EXIT STRATEGY

Drive to holiday parties yourself so you have the option to leave as soon as things get too difficult to handle. Avoid hosting if you can - if you host, you can't leave! ALWAYS make sure you have an escape plan in place.

4. YOU'RE ALLOWED TO CHANGE YOUR MIND

So you've said yes to that thing you said you'd do but now you're absolutely dreading it? Know that you're allowed to change your mind! If you've over-committed yourself, be honest! You're allowed to change your mind.

5. SURROUND YOURSELF WITH SUPPORTIVE PEOPLE

Only surround yourself with people who make you feel supported & understand that you're grieving and might not be up for celebrating this year.



6. KNOW IT'S OKAY TO BE SAD & IT'S OKAY TO BE HAPPY TOO



You don't have to love this holiday season. A lot of it is hard. Give yourself that it's okay to be sad, it's also okay to feel happy - it's okay to get better. It doesn't mean you're "over" the loss.



Make A Plan



For Getting Through the Holidays

Make a List of
Things that Normally
Need to Get Done

*Like shopping, card
buying/writing/mailling, cooking,
decorating, visiting family,
wrapping, holiday specific chores*

*Do I Feel Like
Doing it ?*

*Can I Skip it This Year?
Why or Why Not?*

*Can someone do it
for me?
Or help me get it
done?*

*If I feel I **NEED** to do it,
WHY do I need to do
it?*

*Can anything
make a task or
obligation
easier?*

*How can I bring the
memory of my beloved
into our traditions?*

List Things Your Family
Does Traditionally

*Holiday Dinners, Visits, Trips,
Special Traditions,
Opening Presents, Lights/Sightseeing, that
kind of stuff*

*What new
traditions can I
create to honor my
beloved's memory
and our love?*

Ways to Honour and Remember a Loved One

Personal Rituals

Ways to Honour and Remember a Loved One

Visit their final resting place



Attend the annual memorial ceremony at the Funeral Home



Light a candle



Plant a tree or flowers in a special place



Send a sky lantern into the air

Ways to Honour and Remember a Loved One

Write a poem, song, letter

Journal

Write your story

Create a collage

Paint, Draw, Be Creative



Ways to Honour and Remember a Loved One

Make a memory book

Have a gathering with close friends and family

Write about special memories

Share with others a happy/sad/funny/awkward memory

Get a blanket made from their clothes

Get a teddy bear made with their favourite piece of clothing



Ways to Honour and Remember a Loved One

Place a special ornament on the tree

Set a place at the table

Make their favourite Holiday meal or item of food

Buy your loved one a present and donate it to charity or make a donation to their favourite charity

Write a card or note to your loved one

Watch their favourite movie

Make a toast or remember them at your holiday meal



What can I offer someone who's grieving?

Listening Ear

Be present

Practical Support:

Offer to pick up groceries, cook, clean, drive them places

How to Help Someone Grieving during the Holidays

- Be supportive of the way the person chooses to handle the holidays.
- Offer to help the person with decorating or holiday baking.
- Offer to help with holiday shopping.
- Invite the person to join you or your family during the holidays.
- Ask the person if he or she is interested in volunteering with you during the holidays.
- Donate a gift or money in memory of the person's loved one.
- Never tell someone that he or she should be "over it."
- Be willing to listen.
- Remind the person you are thinking of him or her and the loved one who died.
- Follow up after the holidays to check in.

Holiday Host Etiquette

If you're inviting someone to your home and they're grieving, be sure you're inviting their grief to attend, too. It will be there, anyway.

Don't invite someone with the goal of cheering them up for the holidays. Don't expect them to put on a happy face in your home. Don't demand they fake it til they make it or do something they don't want to do, either.

Invite them with the *loving intention* of offering cheer and companionship and unconditional care during the holidays. To do this, you will need to honor and be responsive to their needs and emotions.

You can do this by privately acknowledging their grief when you make the invitation: *"I know this season is extra hard and your heart is hurting. You and your grief are welcome in our home. Come as you are, we'd be honored to have you with us."*

It's also incredibly loving to honor the reality that it's often hard for grieving folks to know what they will want, need, be up for, or able to tolerate at the holidays.

Giving them an invite without the need for commitment and permission to change their mind is extra loving: *"You don't have to decide right now. If it feels good to be with us, we will have plenty of food and love for you-just show up! I'll check in again the day before to see if you're feeling up to coming over and if there's anything you'd like me to know about how we can support you."*

Your grieving friends and family need attentive care and responsiveness at the holidays, not plans to keep them busy, distracted, and happy.

If they're laughing, laugh with them.

If they're weeping, ask if they'd like your company or your help finding a quiet place to snuggle up alone for awhile.

If they're laughing while weeping, and this is more common than you'd think, stay with them - this is a precious moment of the human experience that is truly sacred.

We don't need to protect ourselves or each other from grief at the holidays. In fact, the more we embrace grief as an honored holiday guest, the more healthy, happy, and whole our holidays will be.

There are no rules for surviving holiday grief.

Do what you need to do to survive.

Honor your loved one how you need to, and do what feels best for your fragile, aching heart.

You are missing a huge piece of you, so do whatever you need to do to find a sliver of peace.

ANGELA VOLLETTI



No rule book. No time frame. No judgement. Grief is as individual as a fingerprint. Do what is right for your soul.

-lfr

Give yourself permission to feel all of your feelings

Sadness, anger, joy, resentment- whatever

It's OK to say 'NO'

Decline invites or cancel plans at the last minute

**GRIEF
AND THE
HOLIDAY SEASON**

@orphan_ish

Check-in with yourself and practice self-care

Meet your daily needs and rest when necessary

Honor and celebrate your loved ones

By combining new and old traditions, memories and rituals

Plan something else to do

Travel, volunteer, be outside