

Living with Loss During The Holidays....

The holidays can be a wonderful time, and yet, for those who have experienced the death of a loved one or other kinds of loss, there is often a heightened sense of loneliness, sadness, and anxiety. Even those who have been coping well may find themselves feeling more melancholy than they have for some time. They might feel like they are taking a step backward in the grieving process. As the holidays approach, decorations appear all around, and celebrations are planned, it is important to be mindful of those who are living with the loss of one whom they have loved and are missing at this important time.

The following are ideas that can be utilized to support those who may be grieving during the holidays:

- Every situation and every loss is unique. Support each person to participate in ways that are most comfortable to them.
- Anticipate the impact of the approaching holidays and assist families and friends in preparing emotionally and practically for how this year will be different than previous years.
- Encourage participation in whatever events seem most comfortable. Although it might be tempting to 'cancel' the holiday, it is better to create a balance between planned activities and times for remembrance and solitude.
- Consider ways to remember and honor the beloved family member during the holiday gatherings.
- Sharing memories is often a source of comfort to those grieving at the holiday time. Ask about their loved one, listen to favorite stories, and look at pictures. These moments of remembering make a tremendous difference on the journey of grief.
- Incorporating physical activity into the daily schedule is a proven way to reduce stress and help combat depression that might arise around the holidays.
- Encourage those who are grieving to be kind to themselves. There is no set time frame for experiencing and working through grief.
- There is no right or wrong way to grieve. Being aware and being able to acknowledge feelings is important. Along with sadness, many other mixed emotions such as anger, joy, and even a sense of relief may be part of the grieving process.
- A sense of satisfaction and joy might be found in helping others in need during the holidays; organize an event designed to collect and deliver toys to deserving children, adopt a local family for the holidays or assist an area non-profit organization with their holiday needs. Take advantage of times to receive comfort through the spirit of doing things for others.
- Overall, be sensitive to the needs of others in the midst of grieving. Can he/she express what would be most helpful? Do they want to talk about their loved one? Do they need some space or are they isolating themselves from all activity and others? What is most important to them during this time? And what can be done to assist each person through the work of the bereavement process?
- Offer a presentation for families, friends and staff who are coping with grief during the holidays.

*May you find a little comfort from what you have read,
From all of us at HospiceTalk*