



Holiday Grief Toolkit



Palliative | Hospice | Grief Support | Kids Path

There is perhaps no milestone so daunting for the newly bereaved as the holiday season: a time typically spent celebrating family and enjoying the company of loved ones.

Getting through your first holiday season without a loved one is difficult, but certainly not impossible. Just as you have weathered the grief process so far, rest assured that you will also weather the holidays.

You can prepare for the time ahead by building your own “holiday grief toolkit”, which is comprised of four main steps:

1. Identify your authentic wishes. The first (and most important) step is being honest with yourself about how you want or need this holiday to look. Start by asking yourself the question, “In a perfect world, what would I do on that day?” If you’re unsure of what you want, try to think through (or write out) several different scenarios to see which feels best to you.

2. Drop your expectations. Don’t force yourself to do anything you’re not up for. Remember: it’s only one year! It’s OK to do something different. Give yourself grace, and don’t feel like you need to be rigid.

3. Make a plan. Even if you anticipate spending the day alone, planning out the day ahead of time can help you know what to expect. When you make a plan, even if it’s something as simple as going and renting a movie to watch, you are giving yourself something concrete on which to focus. Picturing the day ahead of time will make it less intimidating.

4. Find an outlet. Many find that talking to someone, be it a counselor or a close friend, helps them process and understand their feelings. Your outlet can be talking or anything else that helps you work through your emotions (yoga, journaling, running, cooking). If you don’t know what helps, try a few different things, and see what feels best.