

Grief and the Holidays

For those who are grieving, the holidays can be a difficult time of the year.

You may feel angry when you see others celebrating or you may feel deep sadness when finding a gift that would have been perfect for the loved one that you have lost. Remember, you need to let your emotions flow, so that you can deal with them. Share these feelings with a friend who is a good listener.

Holidays can sometimes be stressful or exhausting without the added pain of grief. The best thing you can do is to be prepared; take some time to sit down, make a plan and write it out so you can refer to it later. You have the right to celebrate the holidays differently this year. There is no rule that says you must always do everything the same way.

Don't forget to make time for yourself. Use this time to listen to music, pamper yourself, take a hot bath, write in a journal or just sit quietly reminiscing about your loved one. Taking time for yourself is especially important in stressful situations – so be sure to schedule time alone and be ready to take a “time out” when you need a break.

Finding ways to bring the memory of your loved one into your holiday activities can be helpful. Here are some ideas to consider:

- Light a special candle in memory of your loved one.
- Make a Christmas tree ornament from something that was special to your loved one or from a picture of your loved one.
- Prepare your loved one's favorite meal and share it with friends and family.
- Visit the cemetery or another special place.
- Plant a tree or bush in memory of your loved one indoors or in your yard.
- Create a scrapbook of pictures, stories or other moments that you can look at from time to time with family.
- Give friends and family small gifts that belonged to or were special to your loved one.
- Make a donation in your loved one's name to an organization that was special to them.

If you're finding that you could use some support through this time, or you know someone who could, HopeWest offers comprehensive grief support services to anyone in the community who is grieving the loss of a loved one. Some of the services include:

- Individual and family counseling
- Weekly Mending Hearts grief groups
- Educational in-services on grief
- Grief in the Workplace consultation and training for businesses
- Specialized services for grieving children and teens

For more information about HopeWest's grief support programs call our Adult Bereavement Department at (970) 248-8844 or visit HopeWestCO.org.

