

Tips for Managing Grief During the Holiday Season

Grief can be triggered by any number of things, a scent, a song, a picture. For many Australians the festive season, when we traditionally come together with family and loved ones, emphasises the people missing as much as those who are present.

Managing grief during this period can be challenging, particularly as the prevailing mood in the community is one of festivity and joy.

It is important to remember that everyone experiences grief differently and that it is a normal, human reaction to the loss of a person. It is common and reasonable to experience anxiety, stress, sadness, regret, anger or isolation as part of the grieving process.

Palliative Care Australia sought expert advice from psychologists, social workers and grief counsellors for their top tips on managing grief during the festive season.

1. Acknowledge – remember those you have lost

Talk about them, share memories, play a special song, light a candle, have their favourite drink and make a toast. Do something in memory of your loved one or continue a tradition you have once had with them.

2. Listen – to yourself and take some time for yourself

Each person feels grief differently. If you need to be alone, take time off and be alone. If you want to be with friends, try to surround yourself with friends. Do whatever it is that you feel you need to do in that time.

3. Accept – the holiday season can be a time of mixed emotions

Managing grief while the people around you are celebrating the season can be a real challenge. Accept that your grief is normal and reasonable and be cautious about being hard on yourself for feeling down, if you do. Allow yourself to feel guilt, anger, regret, sadness, but also joy and happiness. Only attend events where you feel comfortable. If you feel it is too difficult to join in on the day, do not force yourself – it is ok to say no and excuse yourself.

4. Talk – Start the conversation

Your friends and family might not know how to talk to you about your loss. Take the first step to initiate the conversation about how you feel or talk about the person who has died so they know it is ok to raise the subject with you.

5. Recognise – Grief changes your world view

When someone close to us dies it changes the way we look at and think about the world. Recognise that and acknowledge that you are trying to construct a new world view without that person's physical presence in your life.

6. Remember the positive

Remembering the positive memories of the loved one can be a good way to honour their life and memory. Grief can be overwhelming so balancing the pain and loss with positive memories can bring solace. Your good memories of someone can give your strength at this difficult time.

7. Seek help – if your feelings impact on your ability to carry out daily activities

If you find that your grief impedes your capacity to perform routine daily functions, you may want to consider seeking professional support.

Services available during the holiday season

- Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement: 1300 664 786
- Beyond Blue: 1300 224 636 - <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/who-can-assist>
- Carers Australia: 1800 242 636
- Government social worker: 132 850
- Lifeline (24/7): 13 11 14
- Kids Helpline (24/7): 1800 55 1800
- Parentline: 1300 30 1300
- Mensline (24/7): 1300 78 99 78
- Sids and Kids Bereavement Support Line for parents who have lost a child (24/7): 1300 308 307

Books on managing grief during the holiday season

- [How Will I Get Through the Holidays? Twelve Ideas for Those Whose Loved One Has Died](#) (Author: James Miller)
- [The Empty Chair - Handling Grief on Holidays and Special Occasions](#) (author: Susan J Zonnebelt-Smeenge and Robert C. De Vries)
- [Healing Your Holiday Grief: 100 Practical Ideas for Blending Mourning and Celebration During the Holiday Season](#) (Author: Alan D. Wolfelt)
- [Surviving Holidays, Birthdays, and Anniversaries: A Guide for Grieving During Special Occasions](#) (Author: Brook Noel)
- [A Decembered Grief: Living with Loss While Others are Celebrating](#) (Author: Harold Ivan Smith)