

TIP OF THE MONTH

WHEN GRIEF AND HOLIDAYS MERGE

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Grief is a reflection of a connection that has been lost.”

-John David Kessler, PhD

Many people experience an increase in the intensity of their grief over the holidays. If you've experienced a loss in your life which is impacting you over the holiday season, consider these recommendations to help you manage your grief:

- Allow time for your feelings, (if you have 550 tears to cry, don't stop at 250).
- Be gentle with yourself.
- Don't do more than you want to do or anything that doesn't serve your healing.
- Remember it is OK if you don't want to follow a tradition - many people find it helpful to try a new location, or a new way of doing things.
- Say "NO" to everything you can possibly say no to that causes you stress or drains your energy, even if it is just "No, not right now."

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- Say “YES” to everything you can that nourishes you, supports you, or brings you comfort.
- Make a list of what and who you are grateful for.
- Reach out to a kind friend who you know will be supportive.
- Don’t be afraid of asking for help and allow others to support you.
- Speak up about what you need & what would be helpful for you.

If your grief is about a loved one who has passed on, some find it helpful to consider the following:

- Light a candle for your loved one.
- Create an online tribute to them, or sponsor a family in need in their honor.
- Take turns sharing favorite or funny stories about your loved one.
- Plant a tree in their honor.
- Give to a charity in their honor.
- Go on an adventure or participate in an activity in their honor.

What to say when someone you care about is grieving:

- I am sorry for your loss.
- I was wondering if the holidays might be particularly hard for you and I’m happy to adjust or do things differently if that would be helpful to you.
- I wish I had the right words, just know I care.
- I don’t know how you feel, but I am here to help you in any way I can.
- You and your family are in my thoughts and prayers.
- My favorite memory of your love one is...
- I am just a phone call away.
- We all need help at times like this, I am here for you.
- I am usually up early or late; if you need anything, just call.
- You can say nothing, just be with the person.
- You can offer a hug instead of saying something.

Risk for Complicated Grief	Signs to Reach Out for Support
Lack of perceived support	High intensity of grief lasting longer than a few weeks
Negative thinking patterns	Unable to sleep, or do nothing but sleep
Multiple losses or high severity of stressful events	Unable to eat, focus, or concentrate
Limited financial resources	Unable to take care of basic needs
History of depression or current depression	Thoughts of harming self, or giving up

[Contact a FEAP consultant for information, support & resources.](#)

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