

TIP OF THE MONTH

WHEN GRIEF AND HOLIDAYS MERGE

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Faculty & Employee
**ASSISTANCE
PROGRAM**

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

-John David Kessler, PhD

Many people sense an increase in the intensity of their grief over the holidays. Given our long experience in a pandemic, and the loss and isolation that has occurred, many more of us may feel the holidays more poignantly than we did before. If sadness or grief impacts you over the holiday season, consider these recommendations to help you manage your feelings:

- Allow time for your feelings.
- 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 new locations and new ways 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 supportive friends
- Don’t be afraid to ask for help and allow others to support you

If your grief is about a loved one who has passed on, you might find these ideas helpful:

- Create an online tribute to them, or sponsor a family in need in their honor
- Take turns sharing favorite 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 in any way I can
- You and your family are in my thoughts and prayers
- My favorite memory of your loved one is...

- I am usually up early or late; if you need anything, just call
- Say nothing, offer a hug, or just be with the person

Risks factors for complicated grief:

- Lack of perceived support
- Negative thinking patterns
- Multiple losses or high severity of stressful events
- Limited financial resources
- History of depression or current depression

Signs to reach out for support:

- High intensity of grief lasting longer than a few weeks
- Unable to sleep or do anything but sleep
- Unable to eat, focus, or concentrate
- Unable to take care of basic needs
- Thoughts of harming self or just giving up

If you need support this holiday season or at any time, FEAP is here to help. Contact us to learn more or to schedule an appointment.

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