

# How to Help the Grieving During the Holidays

## *Twelve Specific Tips for Practical Support*



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As the holidays approach, most people look forward to yearly traditions, gatherings with family and friends, and the general good feelings associated with the season. But, for those who have lost a loved one during the past year, the season may bring anxiety and emphasize their grief.

Often, friends and family members of those affected by a loss are unsure what to say or do to support their grieving family member or friend. In general, the best way to help those who are grieving is to let them know you care. Here are a dozen specific suggestions:

1. Be supportive of the way the person chooses to handle the holidays. Some may wish to follow traditions; others may choose to change their rituals. Remember, there is no right way or wrong way to handle the holidays.
2. Offer to help the person with baking and/or cleaning. Both tasks can be overwhelming for one trying to deal with raw emotions.
3. Offer to help him or her decorate for the holidays, if they wish to do so.
4. Offer to help with holiday shopping. Give them catalogs or on-line shopping sites that may be helpful.
5. Invite the person to attend a religious service with you and your family.
6. Invite them to your home for the holidays.
7. Help the bereaved person prepare and mail holiday cards, if they wish to do so.
8. Ask the person if he or she is interested in volunteering with you during the holiday season. Doing something for someone else may help them feel better about the holidays.
9. Donate a gift or money in memory of the person's loved one.
10. Never tell someone that he or she should be "over it." Instead, give them hope that, eventually, they will enjoy the holidays again.
11. If they want to talk about the deceased loved one or feelings associated with the loss, LISTEN. Active listening by friends is an important step to healing.
12. Remind the person you are thinking of him or her and the loved one who died (call his/her name). Cards, phone calls and visits are great ways to stay in touch.

Hospice of the Piedmont is a valuable resource that can help people who are struggling with grief and loss. Bereavement support is available at no cost to the families served by Hospice and other members of the community as well.