



Suggestions for a Less Stressful Holiday Season

For those who are grieving, the holidays may be especially challenging. Here are some helpful suggestions to create a less stressful season for you and your family.

Set realistic expectations for the holidays.

Use a holiday job list to decide what activities and tasks are really important to you and to your family - simplify. Your energy level is low. Focus and concentration may be difficult. Memory is compromised.

Set realistic goals. Prioritize them and pace yourself. Make a list of what you would like to do, prioritize the items, and ask for help. Set out a timetable for doing those things that are most important to you. Complete one small goal each day.

Do something new. Your life has changed. Decide with your family whether you want to do things differently or keep traditions the same this year. Should you put up a smaller tree or forget about decorating with lights outside? Should you send holiday cards? What about baking and shopping?

Avoid alcohol. When one is grieving, the holiday season can be a time of reflection, self-evaluation and loneliness. Alcohol is a depressant. It can aggravate feelings of sadness at not being with your loved one at this time.

Surround yourself with supportive people. You need people around you who understand your grief

and are comfortable with your sadness. Your first inclination may be to withdraw and hide from the world, but too much isolation can prevent you from feeling connected to those sources of love around you. Our Hope for the Holidays program is another opportunity for support.

Find time for yourself. You also need time to grieve and to be alone with your thoughts and feelings. Balance your day in time alone and time with loved ones and friends. Use your alone time to journal, pray, sleep, or read an inspirational book.

If you find yourself feeling down during the holidays, try these suggestions:

- Take a quiet walk in a park.
- Drink a cup of hot tea or cocoa.
- Get up early and listen to the birds.
- Contact a good friend and have lunch.
- Read an uplifting book by the fire.
- Listen to some quiet music.
- Go to a holiday event or concert.
- Ask someone to drive you around to see the lights, and just be quiet together.