



COPING WITH GRIEF AND LOSS DURING THE HOLIDAYS

WA State Employee Assistance Program

- 1. Take care of yourself**

It is easy to forget to get enough rest and eat right. Taking care of yourself first will help you weather aspects of the holidays that may be hard.
- 2. Find a way to acknowledge the person you have lost**

Rather than avoiding the feelings, find a way to remember and acknowledge the person that is meaningful and positive.
- 3. Incorporate memories or stories about the person into your family traditions**

Remember your friend or family member's role in holiday traditions and share those memories.
- 4. Find new traditions that honor those who are no longer here**

Sometimes it can be very stressful to keep up with "holiday traditions". Consider incorporating a new tradition such as a special decoration or moment of reflection to commemorate your loved one.
- 5. Plan ahead**

Think ahead about what events will be especially emotional for you this year and evaluate what will best ease that pain, whether it be surrounding yourself with family or excusing yourself for a private moment or having time with a smaller group that you feel comfortable with.
- 6. Help others in need**

Our greatest comfort may come in doing something for others. Some feel that they can acknowledge their loss more meaningfully by volunteering to be with older people or children, helping in a hospital or soup kitchen or helping a friend in need. The key is finding what is right for you.
- 7. Don't be afraid to make changes**

Sometimes old traditions or routines can be too painful without important people present. Try something new this holiday season. Consider going somewhere different or changing your traditional holiday menu or activities.
- 8. Do what you can**

Do only what is special and meaningful to you this year. Be brave enough to say "no", and be realistic enough to cancel plans when you change your mind.
- 9. Ask for help**

Ask for and accept offers of concrete assistance with holiday chores like decorating, shopping, cooking or cleaning. Look for ways to involve other people in your holiday planning.
- 10. Speak to someone outside your family/friends**

Local support groups, hospice or on-line organizations like GriefNet.org or GriefShare.org can be helpful.
- 11. Don't be afraid to have fun**

Laughter and joy are not disrespectful. Give yourself and your family members and friends permission to celebrate and take pleasure in the holidays.
- 12. Remember: You will get through this**

It may seem difficult to believe right now, but you will survive. Just be true to yourself as you adjust to the loss.