

Coping Through the Holidays

Ideas to help you manage your grief.

Yesterday, we celebrated the most joyous holiday of the year - Christmas. For most of us, this is a beautiful season of love and giving that segues into parties and celebrations welcoming in the New Year.

For others, however, the holidays are very different. For those who have lost a loved one, this time of year can be excruciatingly painful, abound with constant reminders that the holidays will never be the same again. You may feel that the pain is just too significant to bear, but there are things you can do to help. Here are some ideas to help you manage feelings of loneliness and despair while the world celebrates around you:

1. Give yourself permission to be sad.

You may have spent many holidays with the person you have lost. It is only natural to feel sad that they are not with you.

- Take some time alone to remember all the good things about your loved one.
- Write a letter to the person you have lost.
- Share memories of your loved one with friends
- Create a Holiday Scrapbook dedicated to the one you have lost. Include memories and photos of holidays past and ask friends and family to share their experiences with your loved one in the scrapbook.
- Dedicate a Christmas ornament to your loved one and give it a special place in your home or on your tree. This way, that special person that made the holidays so memorable, will never be forgotten.

2. It's OK to enjoy yourself.

You may not feel like celebrating when you are missing someone you love. Often times, you may feel sadness, guilt or even excitement. Getting together with family and close friends may be a chance to remember the good times, and it's OK to relax and share a laugh. Having fun is not necessarily a sign that you miss that person any less.

3. Take care of yourself.

Remembering that this may be a tough time for you is important. You may have to treat yourself with a little bit of TLC. Usually, I suggest you avoid making major decisions until after Christmas is over. If possible, treat yourself to something you enjoy doing. You might enjoy:

- Going for a walk.
- Going shopping

- Getting a massage.
- Spending time with friends.

3. Talk to someone

Having someone you trust to talk to can be beneficial. This could be a family member or a friend. If you are finding it difficult coping during the holidays, you may want to speak to a professional counselor.

4. Avoid keeping it all in.

Getting things off your chest is important. Keeping your feelings to yourself may mean that the tension builds up inside you. Finding a way to get out what you are feeling may help you to feel better. You may like to talk to someone, write your thoughts down, draw, have a cry or punch some pillows.

More importantly, keep in mind that what you are feeling is most likely normal and expected. Friends and family members will expect the holidays to be difficult for you and are likely to be extra sensitive and caring during these times. Know that there are individuals and organizations available to help you cope during the holiday season. For more information, call my funeral home at 978-632-0158, and I will do my best to help you find the assistance you need.

If you have a question or would like to see a topic covered in this column, please email me at scott@fletcherfuneral.com