

Managing Grief During the Holidays

When we have lost someone or something that is meaningful to us, whether it's a person, a job or a home, we struggle with an array of emotions. Those feelings seem to intensify during holidays or anniversaries. Knowing what to expect is helpful so is deciding how we will handle our emotions and taking action.

- Accept that some things have changed.

Insisting on holding onto "what was" prevents us from enjoying "what is." Changes, whether we wanted them or not, are often opportunities for us to move in a new direction. A direction that we might not have considered if it was not for the loss we experienced.

- Enjoy what you have rather than focusing on what you do not have.

Take a close look at what you have and participate fully by connecting to and appreciating the people and blessings in your life. Call a friend you have not spoken to lately. Start a gratitude journal and list three things you are grateful for each day.

- Modify traditions or invent new ways to celebrate.

Consider making simple gifts rather than buying if you are on a tight budget. A plate of homemade cookies or candy is always a welcome gift.

- Do what you can...not what others expect you to do.

If having a houseful of guests would be too much consider inviting only 4 or 5 people or perhaps forego entertaining altogether and instead accept invitations from others.

- Some people find comfort in volunteering or donating to a favorite charity.

"It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35) Giving from the heart blesses not only the receiver but inevitably finds its way back to the giver, shaken down and spilling over.

- Give yourself permission to have fun and enjoy laughter.
Joy is a blessing. It heals our hearts and renews our faith and hope.

However you choose to celebrate remember that a new year brings new possibilities and new opportunities. Keeping our hearts and minds open to what lies ahead is an excellent way to reaffirm life.