



WHEN THE *Holidays* ARE NOT THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR

TIPS & TRICKS FOR NAVIGATING HOLIDAY GATHERINGS

Holiday gatherings can be particularly challenging when you're grieving the loss of a loved one. These events, often steeped in tradition and joy, can instead magnify feelings of absence and longing. Yet, amidst the difficulty, holiday gatherings can also offer moments of connection, opportunities to honor your loved one, and space to navigate grief alongside supportive friends and family. It's important to approach these gatherings with self-compassion, realistic expectations, and a willingness to experience glimpses of comfort and joy.

Set Boundaries

Communicate your needs ahead of time to family and friends. Let them know what topics or rituals might be too activating for your grief.

Consider Smaller Gatherings

If large family gatherings feel overwhelming, opt for smaller, more intimate groups. This can create a more supportive and manageable environment.

Shorten the Duration


Limit the length of time you spend at gatherings. Attend for a short period or arrive late and leave early to avoid exhaustion.

Bring a Support Person

Invite someone who understands your grief journey and can provide emotional support during the event.

Skip What Doesn't Serve You

Give yourself permission to skip certain gatherings if they feel too painful or draining. Opt for a quiet evening or create a new ritual for yourself.





Focus on Meaningful Activities

Participate only in activities that feel meaningful or comforting. Don't feel obligated to engage in every part of the gathering.

Be Gentle with Yourself

Allow yourself to feel whatever comes up—joy, sadness, or a mix of both. Grieving during the holidays is deeply personal, and all emotions are valid.

Adjust Gift-Giving Expectations

If gift-giving is part of the gathering, consider simplifying it or giving memory-focused gifts in honor of your loved one.

Have an Exit Plan

Arrange for a way to leave early if the gathering becomes too overwhelming. Drive separately or have a friend ready to help you step away.

Express Gratitude for Your Grief

Acknowledge that grief is a sign of love and that attending gatherings is one way to remain connected to those who care about you.

Try Something Totally New

Consider breaking away from traditional holiday gatherings and doing something completely different this year. Plan a trip to a new destination, volunteer at a local charity, or spend the day in nature reflecting and honoring your loved one. Exploring something new can create fresh memories and provide a sense of renewal, offering a different perspective on the holiday season while still holding space for your grief.



BUT REMEMBER . . .

There may be glimpses of joy and comfort this holiday season and you have the right to experience that . . . **WITHOUT GUILT.**