



GRIEF, LOSS, & NEW TRADITIONS DURING THE HOLIDAYS

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected many people in different ways. Now that the seasons are changing and weather is colder, it is more difficult to connect with the people we care about. The upcoming holiday season will likely look much different for many families this year. Dealing with grief and loss during this time can be challenging whether it is the loss of a loved one, grief from missing out on seeing our family, or a loss of normalcy and traditions. Below are some tips and considerations when dealing with grief and loss during this time along with some suggestions for creating new traditions.

Express your needs. It's all right to let people know what is and isn't helpful right now.

Help someone else. It may be helpful to volunteer or perhaps make a donation to a favorite cause in memory of what you have lost.

Give yourself time. There is no set time to be done grieving, but grief usually softens and changes over time. With time, the holidays will become easier to manage.

Be aware of your feelings. Allow yourself to mourn and feel sadness. Identify what you have lost.

Name your strengths and coping skills. Consider other times of loss you've gone through. What did you do to help you get through it? What skills can you draw upon now?

Stay connected. Social distancing doesn't have to prevent you from getting support. Use phone calls, text messages, video chats and social media to stay in touch with family and friends who are positive and supportive. Reach out to those in similar situations.

Limit your news intake. Spending too much time reading or listening to news about the COVID-19 pandemic can cause you to focus heavily on what you've lost, as well as increase anxiety.

Reflect on the journey. Your loss doesn't define your whole experience. Consider some of your good memories and the big picture.

Start a new tradition or adapt the celebration. Here are just a few ways you can still honor traditions during this time:

- Instead of gathering around a table, connect virtually but have the same meal
- Unwrap gifts over the phone or computer
- Make gift bags of goodies for people to pick up from your doorstep or send through mail
- During a virtual dinner, enjoy the same dessert at the same time
- Have an "upside down" or "opposite" holiday -be creative!
- Watch a special movie together over video chat
- Create an audio or visual journal of friends and family singing favorite songs or sharing holiday memories
- Bundle up for an outdoor bonfire or caroling
- Enjoy a virtual holiday trivia game night
- Have a coloring contest where everyone colors a holiday picture and votes on their favorite
- Host an outdoor walk or run with close friends or family



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Adapted from: *Coping with grief and loss during the holidays*. (December 1, 2017) Harvard Health Blog. Retrieved October 30, 2020, from <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/coping-with-grief-and-loss-during-the-holidays-201112244028> and *Coronavirus grief: Coping with the loss of routine during the pandemic*. (2020) Mayo Clinic. Retrieved October 30, 2020, from <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/in-depth/coping-with-coronavirus-grief/art-20486392>

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