

Support for grieving family & friends (during the holidays and beyond)

**Rituals-how we remember those we have lost...
(excerpts from “How Will I Get Through the Holidays” by
James E. Miller, 1996)**

(Different people develop different rituals to honor their loved ones who have died. These rituals may be private or shared.)

Consider creating new rituals, “ones that will include opportunities to remember the past while acknowledging that the person has changed”

- 1. Change your holiday meal routine by dining out at a restaurant rather than at home, have the main meal in someone else’s home or plan a new menu; change how decorations are done or how gifts will be given out**
- 2. Have a tree lighting event that honors the deceased or attend a community event honoring the deceased with other bereaved families.**
- 3. Find a specific way to link yourself with the one who has died (ex. carrying, wearing, using, or placing something in easy sight that reminds you of that person-a stone, cross, piece of jewelry or clothing)**
- 4. Create a remembrance area in your home that includes photos, memorabilia that tells the person’s story...**

- 5. Talk with others about your loved ones to insure that “the past does not remain in the past. It lives on still, in you and in others.”**
- 6. Offer a prayer, a toast at a meal, or lighting a candle in your loved one’s honor**
- 7. Consider a ceremony that includes storytelling and memories of your loved one, planting a tree in that person’s honor (one woman “placed a Christmas tree on her husband’s grave, which she and her children decorated lovingly.”)**
- 8. Make a donation to a non-profit in your loved one’s name (“one woman buys her deceased husband a cow each year-she makes a donation to the Heifer Project, his favorite charity.”)**

Keep in mind that you may not feel like remembering this year. “Don’t force yourself. You’ll know when the time is right.”

Getting through the grief process

- 1. Journal writing**
 - a. Addresses the isolation that many mourners feel**
 - b. Allows individual coping styles to emerge**
 - c. Helps to re-experience feelings that are difficult to express**
 - d. You don’t have to be a “good writer.” You are free to write whatever comes to mind.**
 - e. You are not creating a product; journal writing is a process.**

f. Topics to consider:

- i. What have been major deaths in your life, including any significant loss of people or other changes (i.e. residence, profession, financial security)? How did you cope with these changes? What did you learn that has helped you with your grief?**
- ii. What is your current support system (family, friends, community resources) that has helped you through your loss? How has this system impacted your grief?**
- iii. Describe how some people on whom you usually rely have disappointed you.**
- iv. Write about the events preceding the death of your loved one. Tell the story in narrative form and do not avoid any feelings that are aroused while you tell it. Try not to judge what you did or what you feel now.**
- v. Letter to the deceased:**
 - 1. “It has been _____(length of time)_____ since your death.”**
 - 2. “When I feel the need to communicate with you, I usually feel...”**
 - 3. “When I think of you I remember...”**
 - 4. “The last thing I remember that you did was...”**
 - 5. “These memories make me feel...”**
 - 6. “The biggest change for me, as a result of your death, has been...”**
 - 7. “During your lifetime I wish I could have told you that...”**
 - 8. “The thing I fear most is...”**
 - 9. “I’d like you to know this about who I am now...”**

10. **“I wish you could be here to help me with...”**
11. **“What I miss the most is...”**
12. **“I hope that you now are...”**

2. **Draw, paint or take a photograph that captures how you are feeling**
3. **Make a scrapbook that honors the past and helps you to work through holiday memories.**