

Navigating Grief During the Holidays

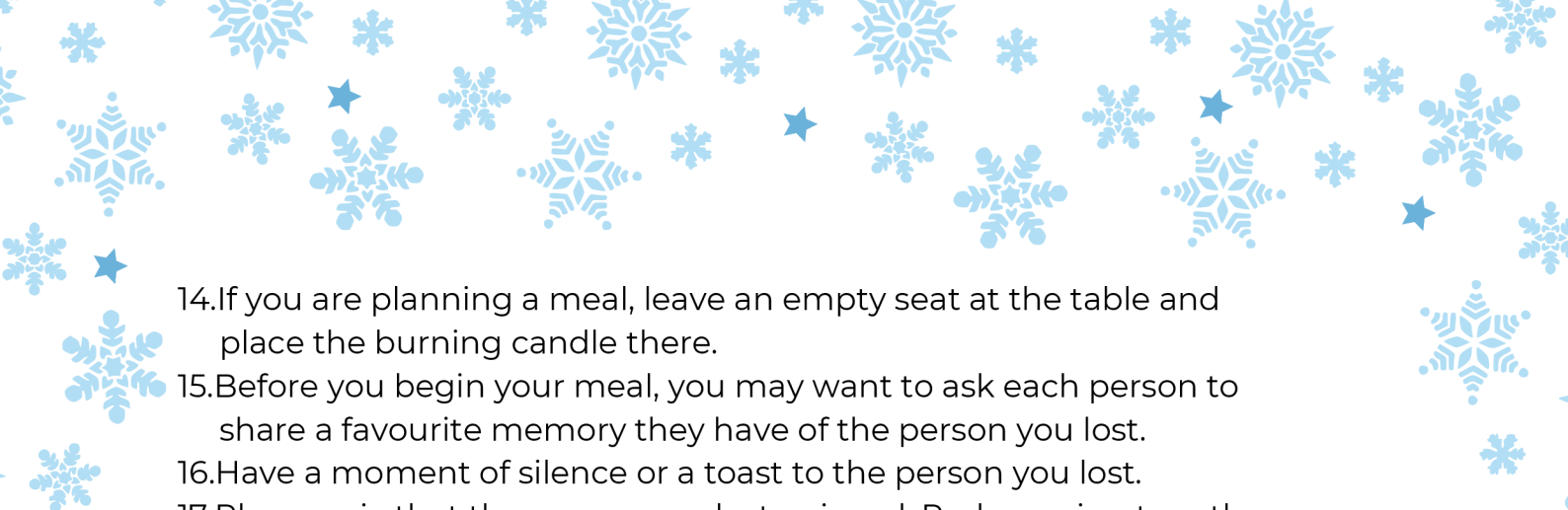
The loss of someone is difficult to manage at the best of times and can be particularly difficult during the holiday season. It seems everywhere you turn there are parties, people are buying presents, everyone is joyful, Holiday music is playing **but you don't feel like celebrating.** It's okay, and it is normal to feel this way. Depending on your situation, you may not be able to just ignore this

holiday season altogether. There may be family members who are full of excitement and expectation of carrying on traditions from previous years or plans for a special celebration.

What do you do? How do you navigate the holidays?

Here are some helpful points to assist you through this.

1. First and foremost is to acknowledge that this holiday season may be very different without your person, and this may be quite difficult for you. Be gentle with yourself and those close to you and remind yourself that you are doing your best.
2. Be honest and tell people what you want to do and what you don't want to do. Don't allow anyone to tell you what you "should" or "should not" do.
3. It's okay if you decide to skip the holiday all together this year. You may decide to donate to a charity in memory of the person you lost instead.
4. You may want to see a Counsellor and talk with someone.
5. Ask for help, even when it is hard to do.
6. You may want to wear clothing or accessories that belonged to the person you lost.
7. Perhaps you may want to scale down "celebrating" this year.
8. You may choose to decorate minimally or even not at all.
9. If stockings are a part of your décor, you may want to create a "memory stocking" in honor of the person you lost. You and others can write down treasured memories and read them together. The same could be done with a "memory box".
10. You may want to keep the menu the same or decide to make it simpler.
11. You may want to include a favourite dish from the person you lost or their favourite dish.
12. If you are planning on having the holiday gathering at home, don't be afraid to ask your family/friends for help. If you feel you cannot hold the event at your home, ask for someone in your family to host the event.
13. Light a candle in memory and have it burn throughout the gathering.

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- 14.If you are planning a meal, leave an empty seat at the table and place the burning candle there.
 - 15.Before you begin your meal, you may want to ask each person to share a favourite memory they have of the person you lost.
 - 16.Have a moment of silence or a toast to the person you lost.
 - 17.Play music that the person you lost enjoyed. Perhaps sing together.
 - 18.Tell stories about the person you lost, and funny ones are good too!
 - 19.Look through and share old photos of the person you lost during previous holidays.
 - 20.Try and do one thing, just for yourself every day, no matter how small it may seem.
 - 21.Try and find one thing or one person in your life to be grateful for each day. Write it down in a journal or call that person and tell them that you are grateful for them in your life.
 - 22.Listen to your body, take a nap, or just have some quiet time.
 - 23.Don't be afraid to turn off the ringer on your phone (just remember to turn it back on after your rest).
 - 24.Bundle up and go outside for a walk or fresh air.
 - 25.Soak in a bubble bath if you can.
 - 26.Eat healthily if you can, and don't be afraid to indulge a bit, but don't let overindulging become your comfort.
 - 27.Alcohol can become a "fast friend" so be careful if you notice this happening.
 - 28.Treat yourself and buy a gift just for you.
 - 29.Buy a gift the person you lost would have enjoyed and donate it to charity.
 - 30.Remember, crying is okay.

While implementing these suggestions, don't forget to find joy in the process. Despite the challenges the holidays may bring, it's perfectly acceptable to experience moments of happiness and to share love. Enjoying yourself doesn't diminish the profound love and sense of loss towards the person you lost, so please release any feelings of guilt associated with these moments of joy. Prioritize self-care, take the time to nurture your heart, and be gentle with yourself this holiday season.

If you find that you are having difficulty coping and don't want to speak with a friend or family member, please call **1-855-310-COPE (2673)**