



DECEMBER: GRIEF AND LOSS

– What Caregivers Need to Know –

The Basics

When we lose someone or something that is meaningful to us, grief is a normal response. The types of loss may come in many different forms: the death of a loved one (including pets), divorce, changing in relationships (including friendships), changes in health, losing a job, and even moving to a new place. Grief is experienced differently by everyone and can range greatly. We may feel a range of emotions such as anger, anxiety, irritability, confusion, exhaustion, sadness, or feeling numb. Grieving at the holidays can be a particularly painful time, but you are not alone. Read on for support with managing holidays and supporting your child's grief.

Managing holidays while grieving

Change the expectation: know that the holidays will look and feel different when grieving a loved one. It's ok that things will look different. Check in with yourself to make sure things feel manageable for you. It's ok to set boundaries with family and friends, this is a time to be gentle to yourself.

Try a new tradition: incorporating a new tradition in to your holiday traditions can bring a positive change. Engage your child in brainstorming new ways to celebrate, or how to incorporate old traditions with new ones. Many families find that volunteering or acts of kindness to neighbors or friends at the holidays bring much needed lightness

Find meaningful ways to remember: there are many ways to incorporate memories of loved ones at the holidays. Engage your child in how they would like to incorporate memory into their holiday celebration. Decorating with pictures of their loved one, listening to their favorite music, cooking their favorite foods, lighting candles for them, or telling stories about them might bring their memory in to your holiday celebration.

Tips for talking with your child about grief and loss:

1. When it comes to grief, there is no normal. Assure you child that all their feelings are ok and that there is no "right way" to feel.
2. It's tempting to remind your child to think of the positives, but sometimes this can feel invalidating or minimizing of their feelings.
3. When processing grief, sometimes what your child needs and what you need may be very different.

Lean on other family members or friends to support you both to get what you need, whether it's extra reminder of your loved one, or some distraction from thinking of them.

Additional Resources

- [Handling Holidays after a Death in the family](#)
- [Grief at the holidays](#)

Questions? Want Support?

Connect with the Mary's Center therapist at your school!

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