



The Holidays and Grief

Here at The Christi Center, we know that the holiday season can be an especially difficult time of year for families who are grieving the loss of a loved one. Know that you are not alone, and that there are many different ways to cope with feelings of grief and sadness. It's not only the holiday season in the winter, but there can be holidays, birthdays, anniversaries that children encounter throughout the year in the face of their loss.

Here are some tips to support your child during those times:

Plan for Connection, Not Perfection

Since anticipation can be worse than the actual holiday itself, the best remedy is usually to face it and plan what would be most healing. Planning decreases anxiety around the holiday, so involve your children and help them to make a simple plan, depending on their age and needs.

- Ask if there are special activities they want to do to honor their loved one.
 - You may want to introduce a couple of ideas to get their creativity going, but then it's important to follow their lead and honor what they want.
 - Keep it simple, especially for young kids! It's more important to do one simple thing that helps your child feel connected in the process, rather than to expect perfection in the end result.

Help Your Child Find Meaningful Ways to Honor Their Loved One's Memory

Time spent together on a project can deepen a mutually fulfilling connection between you and your child.

- Create a scrapbook together to honor their loved one.
- Cook (or go out for) their loved one's favorite meal.
- Play their loved one's favorite music.
- Decorate a frame for their favorite photo of their loved one.
- Ask other family members about their memories of their loved one.
- Make a "memory box" and use it to add some special objects in the loved one's memory throughout the years.
- Release balloons to the sky in loved one's honor, with a special note attached. (Note: Latex balloons are biodegradable, mylar balloons are not.)

Model “Good Grief”

- Allow space for the difficult emotions that may come up, and reassure your child that any emotion, big or small, is important to honor.
- The surviving caregiver can model for their child how to handle emotions. For example, if sadness or tears come up for a grieving mom, she can reassure her child that it’s OK to feel the feelings, but that together, as a family, you all will all get through things.
- In grief, people often forget to take care of themselves, especially grieving caregivers who are also caring for grieving children.
 - Examples: take a day trip, go for a hike, get dinner out at a special place

Focus on Celebrating Their Loved One’s Life

- While allowing for the grief, it’s also important to focus on celebration and hope.
- Working to make the day a little more positive will pay off, and those grief triggering holidays may just get a bit easier with each passing year