

While many families celebrate Christmas, families of multiples from different faiths and cultures may celebrate in different ways, or may celebrate other holidays with their families. This fact sheet is intended to help bereaved families as they face the challenges of holidays while grieving. Please use whichever suggestions seem relevant to you and your family's situation.

There will be several periods during the year that can be difficult for bereaved families – birthdays, anniversaries, weddings to name some - but major holidays like Christmas can be especially difficult. Automatically the mind conjures up family, presents, food, noise and festive air. For bereaved families, trying to celebrate in the midst of grief can be challenging and emotionally draining.

Here are some ideas that may assist you through this stressful time:

1. Holidays, even at the best of times, can be stressful. If it is possible, consider simplifying your celebrations. Reexamine your priorities and identify some you can change. Only attend parties you feel are truly important. Ask family members to only exchange gifts for the children. It may work better for you to not send any cards this year.
2. Try breaking from your normal routine. For example, if you celebrate Christmas, have traditional routines, and attend church services, you may want to go at a different time. Celebrate Christmas Eve rather than Christmas Day.
3. Shop earlier than you usually would to avoid the stores when they get over-crowded closer to the holiday. Consider shopping online. Ask someone else to wrap holiday gifts or write cards for you. You might want to take a vacation over the holiday period.
4. Try to have a good time at any occasion that you are together with your family. Don't feel guilty if you do have a good time.
5. Don't set expectations too high for yourself or for the day.
6. Responding to well wishes can be a challenge. To a "Happy Holidays" wish, you could reply, "I'll try" or "the same to you."
7. Try some volunteering. You could visit someone who is unable to get out, make a donation or send flowers in your child(ren)'s name. You might request that family members make donations in your child(ren)'s name to a meaningful charity.
8. Light a special candle to remember your child(ren).
9. Share special memories or tell stories.
10. Consider donating a toy or clothing to a charity in your community.
11. Do things that make you feel good.
12. Eliminate unnecessary tasks and stress.
13. Keep physically active, get lots of rest and sleep, eat nutritiously, and drink alcoholic beverages and caffeinated beverages in moderation, or abstain.
14. Buy yourself a gift.
15. Try to keep in mind other children in the family and to make it as joyous for them as you can. Let family members know what you feel capable of coping with or being involved in.
16. You may wish to keep a journal.

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17. Some hospitals have Christmas trees with ornaments for bereaved families. Think about hanging an ornament or two.
18. There is no right or wrong way to handle the day. You may feel safer following family traditions, want to begin some new ones or just deviate for the time being. Your wishes can change from year to year.
19. Accept help and support from caring others.
20. Try not to imagine the future. Take one day or even one hour at a time.
21. Holidays and special occasions magnify the feelings of loss. It is natural to experience the sadness that these occasions can bring. Try not to block these feelings. A good cry to release built-up sorrow can leave you better able to face day-to-day holiday cares.
22. Make sure there is balance in your life – eat, sleep, rest, read, work and relax.
23. Hold onto HOPE! The anticipation of a potentially stressful time is often worse than what actually happens. Future years will most likely bring some healing and ability to enjoy this time of year again in ways that are hard to imagine when you are weighed down by sorrow.
24. You may choose not to recognize or celebrate the significant day at all. For example, you may choose to go away during this time and just not participate in any festivities.

Multiple Births Canada

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