

Take Care of Yourself. Avoid using alcohol to self-medicate your mood. Try to avoid the “hustle bustle” of the holiday season. Physical exercise is often an anecdote for depression. Writing in a journal can be a good outlet for your grief expression. Buy yourself something frivolous that you always wanted but never allowed yourself to indulge in.

Create a new tradition or ritual that accommodates your current situation. Some People find comfort in the old traditions. Others find them unbearably painful. Discuss with your family the activities you want to include or exclude this year. Some examples of new rituals and traditions include:

- Announce beforehand that someone different will carve the turkey this year.
- Create a memory box. You could fill it with photos of your loved one or written memory notes from family members and friends. Young children could include their drawings in the memory box.
- Make a decorative quilt using favorite colors, symbols or images that remind you of the person who died.
- Light a candle in honor of your absent loved one.
- Put a bouquet of flowers on your holiday table in memory of your loved one.
- Visit the cemetery and decorate the memorial site with holiday decorations.
- Have a moment of silence during a holiday toast to honor your loved one.
- Place a commemorative ornament on the Christmas tree.
- Dedicate one of the Chanukah candles in memory of your loved one.
- Write a poem about your loved one and read it during a holiday ritual.
- Play your loved one’s favorite music or play their favorite game.
- Plan a meal with your loved ones’ favorite foods.

The most important thing to remember is there is no right or wrong way to celebrate the holiday season after the death of a loved one, and that the best way to cope with that first holiday season is to plan ahead, get support from others, and take it easy.

Books on Grief and the Holidays

James Miller, *How Will I Get Through the Holidays? Twelve Ideas for Those Who’s Loved One Has Died.*

Drs. Clarence Tucker and Cliff Davis, *Holiday Blues – A Self Help Manual on Grief Through the Holidays*