Grief and the Holidays / Tips for Surviving

The holidays are a time of joy, laughter, traditions, get-togethers and gift giving. For people who are grieving, the holidays can be a time of mixed emotions, not having the energy to keep up with the multiple demands and the painful reminder that your loved one is not there to celebrate with you.

As the holidays approach we encourage you to take care of yourself by planning ahead. Sit down with family and friends to discuss and decide what you will want to do for the holidays. You may decide there are holiday traditions that you will like to continue and decide on new traditions that you would like to begin.

The following tips can be helpful for managing the holidays:

1. **Self Care**: grief is hard work and takes a lot of emotional and physical energy. Sleep and rest as needed, eat well and engage in exercise. Avoid overindulgence in alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, sweets.

2. **Allow Yourself to Feel**: sadness, anger, anxiety, fear, guilt may increase during the holidays. Share your feelings with someone who is a good listener. Allow yourself to cry.

3. **Set Limits**: get rid of “should statements” regarding the holidays. Tell yourself and others that you will not be “overdoing” this holiday season. Focus on the healing effects of small pleasures.

4. **Caring**: allow yourself to accept the offers of caring / help from others even if it may feel uneasy or awkward. It’s okay to tell people how they can help. Accepting another’s care can help with closeness.

5. **Remember Your Loved One**: honor the memory of your loved one by creating a grief ritual. Lighting a candle, having a moment of silence before a meal, sharing memories, visiting the grave or making a donation by using the money you would have spent on your loved one’s gift.

6. **Hope**: remember it is okay to enjoy the holidays and to laugh. It helps with knowing that sometime in the future the grief will be less raw and painful.