

Happy Holidays?

Navigating the winter holidays with grief and COVID-19



It's hard to put into words how radically things have changed our world and everyday lives over this year. When we're grieving, everything can feel hard and unfamiliar. Add in the pandemic and how it's altering our daily routines, plans, and ability to gather with others, and things can feel extremely overwhelming. Even though physical distancing doesn't mean we can't still find ways to connect, it's hard to substitute technology for in-person hugs, tears, and nods of understanding. What's more, the person we would have turned to for support in all of this might be the person who died.

The pressures of the holidays can make life even more challenging. While there are no right or wrong ways to cope during the holidays — especially during a pandemic — here are some tips to consider as you navigate this time of year.

Plan ahead. It's so hard to plan anything right now, but it's still helpful to talk with family and friends ahead of time to set expectations, limits, and hopes for the winter holiday season. Remember, it's okay to say no. Just because it's something you've always done, doesn't mean you have to do it this year.

Help yourselves by helping others. Look for an organization or cause that inspires you to donate or volunteer. Need help deciding? Think about causes important to the person you're

grieving. With Covid, you could also think about buying gift certificates to local restaurants and businesses that the person who died loved.



Ask the kids. Talk about what's important to them about this time of year. What memories do they have? What are they most going to miss this year? Not everyone has positive memories, so let them know it's okay to talk about the hard ones too.

Re-think traditions. When it comes to traditions, there's no right or wrong way to do the holidays. This year, due to Covid, you might have to get creative and either rework the traditions you want to continue or create new ones

It's okay to have fun. Reassure your kids (and yourself) that laughing, playing, and having a good time doesn't mean they love or miss the person any less.

Schedule silence. Even with Covid, the calendar might get busy with video chats and phone calls, so be sure to reserve time for YOU. It could be five minutes of daily quiet, limiting social events

to once a week or even just one for the month. The key to “doing it right” is tuning in and giving yourself space to do what feels best for you.

Change your scenery. If physical distancing measures mean you can’t gather with friends and family this season, find ways to change up your scenery. This could be visiting a nearby park, checking the internet for virtual tours of new locales, or finding drive through options for light displays.

Remember and honor the person you’re grieving. Some ideas include lighting a candle each morning or night, preparing the person’s favorite meal together, or creating a playlist of the person’s favorite songs.

Get extra help when needed. While most children will not require professional services

to address their grief, many will benefit from additional support. This might mean attending a grief support group or connecting with a therapist. If you live in the Portland, Oregon metro area and are interested in grief support groups at the Dougy Center, please call 503-775-5683. For information on grief support groups beyond our service area and other helpful resources on loss and grief, visit our website at dougy.org.



The Dougy Center Bookstore/Resources

The Dougy Center has been helping children, teens, young adults and their parents cope with death since 1982. Our practical, easy-to-use materials are based on what we have learned from more than 55,000 Dougy Center participants. To order online, visit dougy.org or tdcbookstore.org, or call 503.775.5683.

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Our Mission

The mission of the Dougy Center is to provide grief support in a safe place where children, teens, young adults, and their families can share their experiences before and after a death. We provide support and training locally, nationally, and internationally to individuals and organizations seeking to assist children in grief.