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Bereaved Holiday Plan Guidelines



Meet as a family

Set aside a chunk of time to meet with your family in a comfortable and safe place. Acknowledge the loss and normalize that the holidays are a difficult time for those who have had a child or loved one die. Allow children and teens to know that their thoughts and feelings are just as important, and encourage them to participate in the discussion. It is okay if a disagreement comes up! Ask clarifying questions and repeat back what you heard them say to avoid any miscommunications. Try to find solutions that work for everyone.



Questions to consider

Outside of the family, who can you turn to for support and what does that support look like? What did the holidays mean to the person who died? What will it look like if one family member doesn't want to do something that everyone else wants to do? How do you want to honor your loved one?



Expectations and boundaries

Setting realistic expectations for yourself and your family can help alleviate feelings of being overwhelmed. What boundaries do you need to set with family and friends? (e.g., letting people know that you need to take a break, are not feeling ready to exchange gifts or participate in all family holidays). What are your hopes for this season? (Think about your goals for the holidays, whether it's to find small moments of peace or simply getting through the holidays).

Discussion Checklist:

Traditions

- What traditions do we want to continue?
- What new traditions do we want to add?
- Are there any traditions we should reevaluate this year?

Food

- What foods do we typically cook?
- Do we want to cook at home, go out, or get take-out?
- What were the favorite foods of the person who died?

Events/Gatherings

- What gatherings do we want to attend this year?
- Prepare responses to questions about the person who died.
- Create an "exit plan" if the gatherings are too overwhelming.

Decorations

- Would we like to decorate this year?
- What were the favorite decorations of the person who died?
- Do we want to create decorations to honor the person who died?

Reflection

- Do a check-in after the holidays.
- What worked/what didn't?
- What could we have done differently?
- How are we doing after the holidays?
- How can we continue to support one another in the new year?