

# Holidays difficult for those who are grieving

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The holidays are a time full of traditions, emotions and memories — yet for those who've recently lost a loved one, it's a time full of fanfare that can amplify their grief.

"It's a difficult time for many people, especially for people who are grieving," said Nancy Jakobsson, Pathways Hospice's service director.

"There are anticipations of what the holidays might be like without that person in it."

While it may be hard, Jakobsson said, there are a few tips for those grieving to help cope through the holidays.

Pathways Hospice, which cares for terminally ill patients and their families, makes the following suggestions:

- **Accept the likelihood of your pain.** There is no way to erase the fact that you're missing someone. Take time to examine your apprehensions and think about what may be difficult for you. Give yourself permission to express your feelings of grief.

- **Accept your limitations and plan accordingly.** Grief takes a toll physically and emotionally. Decide what you can handle in holiday planning and meet with family members to delegate tasks. Ask yourself: Do I really want to do this or can it be done by someone else?

- **Don't be afraid to make changes.** Holidays are full of traditions and customs, which may be impossible to replicate without a certain loved one there.

"If you try to make it the same, it's so obviously different," Jakobsson said. Instead, create new traditions, from eating dinner at a different time to celebrating the season from abroad. Remember, the changes made this year don't have to last forever.

- **Remember to remember.** Bring the loved one's name up in conversation, and encourage others to do the same. Find ways to remember them in a symbolic way, too, such as lighting a candle in their honor or volunteering with their favorite nonprofit. Children also can get involved, perhaps creating an ornament in a person's memory.

- **Consider doing something for others.** Grief can be isolating, so it may be helpful to place your attention outside yourself. Visiting someone in a nursing home, adopting a family in need or volunteering at a shelter are all ways to give back while finding meaning in your life.

- **Be gentle with yourself and renew your resources for living.** Treat yourself with compassion and love, and avoid committing yourself to more than you can handle. Additionally, take a personal inventory of your life, considering what's meaningful to you. Spend time with people who understand you and share your values and beliefs.

Counseling for bereaved community members is available through the holiday season and year-round through Pathways Hospice. For more information, call 663-3500 or visit [www.pathways-care.org](http://www.pathways-care.org).