

Health Tips

Grief and the *Holidays*

How can I help myself?

- **Build on tradition.** For the holiday meal, place a lighted candle on the table in honor of the deceased; include one of his/her favorite foods. Create a memorial ornament or decoration. If the person who has died always played a special role in holiday festivities, formally ask another family member to carry on the tradition.
- **If tradition is too painful,** change the way you celebrate. Instead of putting up a Christmas tree indoors, decorate an outdoor tree with lights and food items for the birds. Go out for dinner with friends or family instead of trying to have a crowd in for a holiday meal. Instead of staying at home, where memories may be strongest, take a holiday trip.
- **Do something for others.** Volunteer to help others, through your place of worship or a charity. Invite someone who is alone during the holiday to join you and your family for a meal, a religious service, or an activity such as a concert. Make a donation to a favorite cause in memory of the deceased.
- **Help yourself adjust.** Let others know that you might not participate in all the usual festivities. For example, you may feel like attending a religious service, but not the gathering that follows. Feel free to change plans at the last minute. Cry if you need to. Let others know if it's OK for them to share their memories of the deceased with you.

(Harvard Women's Health Watch, Dec. 2002, pg. 1 quote.
F. Atkins, PhD, RN, CNS)

Provided by Community of Christ Health Ministries Assoc.

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