



5 ESSENTIAL STEPS FOR COPING WITH BEREAVEMENT AT CHRISTMAS

By Dr. Pam Spurr

If you have lost someone close to you this year, these cheerful festive weeks leading up to Christmas can be very emotionally distressful and upsetting. Self help expert, life and solutions coach, Dr Pam Spurr, helps you to continue healing during this festive season with these 5 essential steps to coping with bereavement this Christmas.



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Commemorate the loved one in a meaningful way

One of the most valuable techniques for getting through a particularly difficult period like Christmas is to commemorate the loved one in a meaningful way. Commemoration can take many forms and can serve as a small or even large milestone in the process of grief. For example, if you've lost your partner this year, and they always said they wanted to visit the Christmas lights in Trafalgar Square but never got around to it, you can commemorate them by doing just that. In this example you'd take a friend or family member with you to Trafalgar Square and honour your loved one by thinking of how much they would have enjoyed the festivities.



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Talk to someone else about your loss

You might think that you'll burden others by mentioning your loss over the Christmas season. One of our biggest problems in grieving, as a culture, is that we're too frightened to raise the subject of bereavement. And this goes as much for our own loss as it does someone else's. In actual fact, by far the majority of people would be touched that you'd confide sad feelings to them, or ask after them if they've been bereaved themselves. You can raise the way you feel by acknowledging that you don't want to 'change the atmosphere' or 'bring the mood down' but that you want to confide your feelings. Most will be receptive and happy for you to discuss your emotions. Finding that you can bring up your feelings in a constructive way, and talking about how you are doing, will in turn help you move forward.



You may want to leave out certain traditions 'just this year'

Certain traditions may be particularly painful without your loved one, but you may not want to experience a secondary sense of loss by letting that tradition go altogether. Instead tell yourself that 'just this year' you won't carry out that tradition because you're not up to it. This is part of not looking at your immediate grief as something that's going to be with you 'forever' at this level of intensity. It's about living day by day with your grief, and that includes making changes now that you might go back on in the future.



Place your needs first and foremost at this time of year

Place your needs (and if the bereavement has affected other people close to you, like your children, then theirs also) first and foremost at this time of year. You're entitled to be selfish with your time, the things you're prepared to do, or not prepared to do. This means you can say 'No' to invitations that you're not up to. Practice saying something simple, like: 'Thank you for your kind offer but I'm simply not up to it yet'. Don't be pressured by well-meaning people and stick to doing the things that work for you – even if they're a bit different! Sometimes doing quirky and unusual things snaps us out of the heavy black cloud of grief. So if you want to watch your loved one's favourite action DVD on Christmas Day – even if it seems inappropriate – you go ahead and do so!



Allow yourself to grieve and feel your emotions

Most importantly, there's nothing wrong with grief. If you feel like crying, wringing your hands, or even being quiet for a few hours, then that's your prerogative. People who grieve 'successfully' know their feelings can change by the day and even by the hour. Allowing yourself to grieve, letting others know that you're feeling 'up' that day or 'down' is an important part of coming to terms with your loss.



“MAY YOUR WARM
MEMORIES OF YOUR
LOVED ONE BRING YOU
AND YOUR FAMILY A
MEASURE OF COMFORT
THIS CHRISTMAS.”

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