

# RAINBOW CONNECTIONS

## HOLIDAYS AND GRIEF

Holidays are exciting, happy times, but when we are grieving they can be difficult, sad times. We often miss the person more at the holidays than at other times. We feel our pain more and we are more aware of the difference between other people's happiness and our sadness. We are also aware of how holidays used to be and wonder if they will ever be happy again. Sometimes we do not even want to celebrate the holidays.

"Since my dad died so close to Christmas we had to celebrate without him - also I had to go through my 10th birthday without him. He died in November and my birthday is in December. Father's Day was last Sunday, so for that my mom put the collage she made from pictures of my dad by himself on something like an altar. She put the collage, a picture of him that I took in Kauai, and a picture of him and my mom that was blown up and the statue of the Blessed Mother on the altar-like thing."  
- Maria, age 11



The children we have worked with have shown us some ways to make the holidays less difficult and more full of meaning. They involve bringing the memory of the person who died into the holidays. Some ways to make the holidays easier include:

- Having lots of quiet time, time to play quietly or watch a video with just the family or a friend.
- Finding or making special times to think about the person who died and sharing our feelings with someone who has the time to listen
- Getting plenty of exercise and play time and also enough rest.

By finding ways of bringing the memory of the person who died into our holiday activities, we also make the holiday easier to bear.



Some ways to memorialize a person (which means to bring the memory into the present) include:

- Having a special candle that is lit when the family gathers for a holiday
- Giving each person a small present or something that belonged to the person, such as a button or a picture, or something that reminds us of him or her.
- Eating the loved one's favorite meal or at their favorite restaurant.

- Visiting the gravesite or place where the ashes are, or where they were spread, and leaving a memento (like a flower, a note or card written to the person who died)
- Having a Christmas stocking for the person who died – putting notes written to the person in it along with little gifts (fruits/nuts, handmade things). Everyone should decide ahead of time whether the notes will be read aloud at a gathering or kept private.

## ACTIVITY IDEA

### Memory Book

Draw a picture in your memory book or write in your journal about a special holiday which you had with the person who died.



### Draw how you feel

Use this circle to make a face showing how you feel today.



## RECOMMENDED BOOKS

### Nana Upstairs & Nana Downstairs

by Tomie de Paola

*To be read to school age children. A touching story about the love of a boy for his grandmother and great-grandmother and how he copes with their deaths.*

### Badger's Parting Gifts

by Susan Varley  
*Old Badger was a good friend and teacher to the woodland creatures and they are overwhelmed when he dies. Then each remembers what Badger has taught them. A good story about old age and the importance of memories.*

## SHARE HOW YOU ARE DOING!

Please call us if you would like to share your experiences with the feelings talked about in Rainbow Connections, or any other problems you might have. Kids are always teaching us about their grief and what helps them.



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