

CONNECTIONS

FOR TEENS



Coping with the Holidays

For teens that are grieving, the holidays are often the most difficult time of the year. Holidays can be exciting, happy times - full of special memories and traditions. These traditions and memories will likely bring on a full range of emotions. You may feel more anger when you see others celebrating or you may feel deep sadness when finding a gift that would have been perfect for the loved one who has died. Remember, don't "stuff" these emotions away – you need to express them so that you can deal with them. Share these feelings with a friend who is a good listener.

Holidays are often stressful and exhausting without the added pain of grief. The best thing you can do is to be prepared for the holidays. Included in this newsletter are some ideas to help you get through the holidays. Many of these suggestions include working with your family and friends. Sit down with your family now and make a plan for the holidays. Let them know what you need.

Remember, it may be helpful to celebrate the holidays differently this year. Write your plan down on paper so that you can refer to it later. Communicating with those close to you will help make this holiday season a little easier.

Remember to make time for yourself. Use this time to listen to music, take a hot bath, write in your journal, or take some quiet time to reminisce about your loved one. Making time for yourself is especially important in stressful situations, so be sure to schedule time alone and to call a "time out" when you need a break.

Finding a way to bring the memory of your loved one into your holiday activities can also be healing and helpful. Here are some things that other teens have done to remember their loved one during the holiday season:

- Light a special candle in memory of your loved one. This candle could be just for you or you could place the candle at the dinner table to share with family meals. Maybe it would be more appropriate on the mantle as a symbol for all to see during the holiday festivities.
- Make an ornament for the Christmas tree. This ornament could be made of

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"Hospitality is not entertaining. Hospitality is an attitude of opening up your life so that others can come in." -Pam Farrel

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something that was special to your loved one or from a picture of your loved one.

- Prepare your loved one's favorite meal and share it with friends and family.
- Visit the cemetery or other special place. Go alone or with others. Say a prayer or bring flowers with you.
- Plant a tree, bush or other plant in memory of your loved one. You may want to plant it in a pot in the house and transplant it in the spring to the garden or other area in the yard.
- Create a scrapbook of pictures, stories or other moments that you can look at with your family.
- Give friends and family small gifts that belonged to or were special to your loved one.

- Decorate the altar at church in memory of your loved one. Contact your church in advance to make arrangements.
- Make a donation to a charity in the name of your loved one. Pick a charity that was special to your loved one. The donation does not have to be large – every little bit helps.
- Hang a stocking in memory of your loved one. Feel free to put small gifts in the stocking or you and your family could write messages to your loved one and put them in the stocking. Later, you and your family can set aside some time to open these gifts and/or read the messages aloud.
- Acknowledge your loved one in the form of a gift for your home or a non-profit organization.

Coping Corner

Ideas You Can Use to Help Your Grief Heal

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Make a plan for the holidays. You do not have to celebrate Christmas the same way this year.

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Bring the memory of your loved one into your holiday celebration. Many suggestions were included in this newsletter. If you need other ideas you can brainstorm with family and friends to find an idea that will work for you.

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Communicate with family and friends how you would like to celebrate this year. Let them know your ideas and plans. This will make the holiday season a lot easier.

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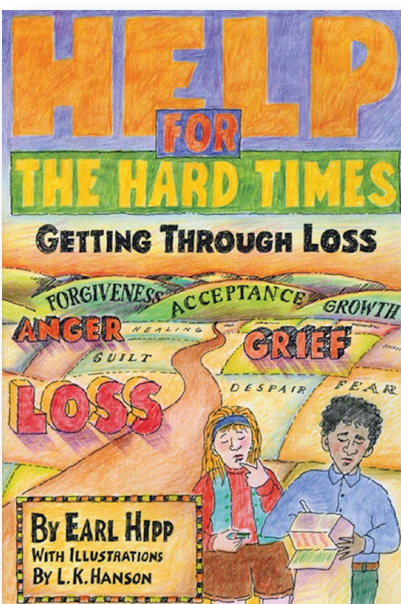
Take care of yourself. Schedule some down time to sit and relax. Make sure to get plenty of rest.

This Month's Helpful Book & Movie



Movie: *Step Mom* rated PG-13

Three years after divorcing Jackie, the mother of his children, Luke decides to take the next step with girlfriend, fashion photographer Isabel Kelly. When Isabel meets Luke's children for the first time, their fierce allegiance to their mother is obvious. Try as she might, Kelly fails to connect with the kids until a looming family crisis changes everything – their mom has been diagnosed with cancer.



Book: *Help Through the Hard Times* by Earl Hipp

Written especially for teens, this book illustrates that loss and change are part of human existence. The author offers practical ideas for continuing to live life after a loss that may seem overwhelming.

