



Coping with Grief at Christmas time

For many children and families Christmas is a very special and important time and thinking about it when someone close to us has died can feel difficult.

The build up to and planning for Christmas can also add to feelings of exhaustion.

We need to find ways of looking after ourselves and helping our children to have fun while remembering those who are no longer with us.

Here are some ideas that we hope you might find helpful:

1. Agree what is important and manageable for your family as Christmas will be different. Ideas:- remembering and talking about the person who has died, a particular tradition, doing something special or different altogether.
2. Reduce stressors where possible. Ideas:- ask others to help, shop online or with a friend, don't take on too much, if you've lost a partner ask a family member / friend to help if children want to buy you a present, take a break from TV / social media
3. Try to maintain some routine for children and prepare children for things that might be different.
4. Acknowledge difficult feelings, it's ok to have quiet and alone time, space to let off steam.
5. Make space for fun and enjoyment for and with the children. Ideas:- do something outdoors / active, play a game, read or tell a story.
6. Look after yourself, remember what keeps you well and accept help.





Ideas for remembering a loved one at Christmas

Make or do something to remember them in the home. Some ideas are:

- Make a Christmas decoration or picture, light a candle, play a favourite song.
- Write them a card, make a donation, make a present.
- Do something the children enjoyed doing with the person who has died.
- Share memories

Most importantly be kind to yourself.

Here's a little excerpt from the book "The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse" by Charlie Mackesy that we'd like you to hold onto:

"Sometimes", said the horse.

"Sometimes what?" asked the boy.

"Sometimes just getting up and carrying on is brave and magnificent."

Helplines:

CRUSE National Helpline on 0808 808 1677 If you're struggling to deal with the grieving process over Christmas, see here for opening hours

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/telephone-support/christmas>. Alternatively you can message a trained grief counsellor using our CruseChat service 9am - 9pm Monday - Friday.

Papyrus Hopeline - If you are concerned that a young person is feeling suicidal, advisers can support you to start a conversation about suicide and explore options of how best to support them. Call: 0800 068 4141, Text: 07860039967, Email: pate@papyrus-uk.org. Opening hours: 9am - midnight every day of the year (Weekends and Bank Holidays included)

Samaritans - Whatever you're going through, you can call any time, from any phone for FREE. Call: 116 123





Message on a tag:

A simple way to remember your loved one at Christmas is to get a gift tag and write a message to them - it could be something you would like to say to them if there were here or a good memory you have of them. Hang the message on your Christmas tree to help keep their memory alive.

Bauble with ribbon/fabric:

Clear Baubles with ribbon/fabric - all you need for this is a clear bauble that you can put things inside - any shape. Then think about the person who has died. Then inside the bauble you can either put ribbons and fabric that remind you of that person - their favourite colour etc or if you have old clothes/fabric of theirs you could cut some of the fabric up and put bits of the fabric inside the bauble as a keepsake and hang on the Christmas tree each year to help keep their memory alive.



Light a candle:

The act of lighting a candle in honor of someone who has died is a centuries old tradition that allows us to express what we often feel we cannot communicate in words. By lighting a candle for someone who has died we can pause for a moment and reflect and remember their life and the memories you have.

Other things you can do - listen to their favourite music - perhaps they had a favourite Christmas song? You could also choose to eat their favourite food over the festive season or drink their favourite drink and toast them at a meal. If the person who has died was a big part of your Christmas tradition, try to have a conversation with your family to think about what you may do differently this year or would like to continue to do the same. Talking to each other can also be really helpful to understand how each other are feeling so that you can support each other during what may be a difficult time for many.

