



## Grief and the Holidays

Below are a few suggestions that might be helpful this time of year. Take only what you can use and feels comfortable to you.

- Acknowledge that this year will be different.
- Think about what aspects might be most difficult for you and choose to alter or eliminate them.
- Talk with your children about what is most important to them and decide together what to keep and what to let go of for this year.
- Give yourself permission to make changes.
- Let go of your expectations of yourself.
- Be gentle with yourself regarding the demands. Shop when it is not busy or buy from catalogues or on the internet.
- Ask for and accept help. Let others know specific things they can do that would help you the most.
- Allow and express your feelings. Create support for yourself.
- Listen to your heart. Decline invitations or feel free to change your mind at the last minute. If you do go, be ready to leave when YOU have had enough.
- Take time to honor your loved one in a personally meaningful way. Let the children be involved in planning how you will do this.
- If you have the energy to do so, consider helping others in need. Consider doing something in your loved one's name.
- Include your loved one in your traditions or new rituals.
- Plan breaks for quiet time, rest, play, walks, or other ways to care for yourself.
- Do something special for yourself.
- Keep in mind that sometimes the anticipation of a significant date can be worse than the day itself.



### Ideas that others have found meaningful:

- I always like to light a candle wherever I am spending the holidays and name the people who are celebrating with us in spirit. Often I am not the only one experiencing a loss.
- The first year after my son died, I chose something special of his for each family member and wrapped it as a gift to that person from him. It was a way to bring him and his memory into the celebration.
- Each year I try to find someone (instead of the person who has died) to give a gift to as another way of honoring the love we shared.
- Telling stories and remembering the holiday times with a loved one has been helpful.
- Hang a stocking for your loved one. Ask family and friends to write a note to place in the stocking.
- A family tradition we have is passing along a silly gift to a different person each year. This year I was thinking of starting a new tradition by wrapping something that was my mom's and let that become the new "pass along" gift.



## Four Candles

This following ritual has been used at *The Center* as part of a memorial night. The source is unknown. You might want to place a picture and other meaningful objects on a table with four candles and, as you light each candle, read from this passage:

As we light these four candles in honor of you, we light one for our grief, one for our courage, one for our memories, and one for our love.

1. This candle represents our grief. The pain of losing you is intense. It reminds us of the depth of our love for you.
2. The candle represents our courage – to confront our sorrow – to comfort each other – to change our lives.
3. This light is in your memory – the time we laughed, the times we cried – the times we were angry with each other – the silly things you did, the caring and joy you gave us.
4. This light is the light of love. As we enter this holiday season day by day we cherish the special place in our hearts that will always be reserved for you. We thank you for the gift your living brought to each of us. We love you.