

SUPPORTING A GRIEVING PERSON DURING THE HOLIDAYS

Compassionate guidance for family, friends, and caregivers

The holidays can magnify the absence of someone who has died. Familiar traditions, music, gatherings, and expectations may bring comfort, sorrow, or both at once. Support begins by acknowledging that the season may be difficult, allowing plans to change, and offering companionship without expecting the grieving person to celebrate—or grieve—in any particular way.

ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR GRIEF

You do not need to avoid the loss to protect them. A sincere acknowledgment can ease the loneliness of the season.

- Mention their loved one by name
- Recognize that the holidays may feel different
- Allow both joyful and painful memories
- Say, “I am remembering [Name] with you.”

LET THEM CHOOSE

Traditions that once felt comforting may now feel overwhelming. Give them permission to decide what is manageable.

- Offer invitations without guilt or pressure
- Accept a last-minute change of plans
- Respect a wish for company or solitude
- Do not insist that traditions remain the same

OFFER SPECIFIC SUPPORT

Grief can make planning and decision-making difficult. A clear, practical offer is often easier to receive than a general one.

- Bring a meal or help with holiday errands
- Offer a ride to a gathering or service
- Help decorate—or quietly put decorations away
- Ask, “Would you like company for an hour?”

STAY GENTLY CONNECTED

Support matters before, during, and after the holiday itself. A brief message can remind them they have not been forgotten.

- Send a card or text with no reply required
- Check in after gatherings and special days
- Remember that grief may return each year
- Continue including them while respecting their limits

A GENTLE REMINDER

The most meaningful gift may be your willingness to make room for their grief, remember the person they love, and let the holiday be whatever they need it to be.

You do not need perfect words. Your steady, compassionate presence matters.

