



Surviving the Holidays During a Time of Grief

The holiday season can be a time of heightened emotions. Family dynamics, financial pressures, the list goes on. But grief can feel like an impossible wave when it becomes part of the equation. It's vital to recognize and validate your feelings.

The loss of a loved one is a profound experience. During the holidays, it can resurface, making it challenging to reconcile the season's joy with your grief, whether it's the first holiday or the tenth.

Experts suggest that if you are dealing with the loss of a loved one, you need a plan to minimize your anxiety and yet acknowledge and celebrate not only the holiday but the loved one. In our first year without Conor, we had no plan, only to get through.

In hindsight, not the best way to acknowledge or deal with the holiday in our grief. For instance, we could have set up a memorial table with Conor's favorite things or shared stories about him during dinner. These are just a few examples of how we could have acknowledged and celebrated Conor during the holiday season.

Acknowledge that it will be different. Knowing what will help and what will not will be highly beneficial. You may find that you won't know until it becomes an issue or non-issue.

- You may want to examine the traditions your family practices. Will they be hurtful or healing? That first holiday without Conor, we did nothing we traditionally did, and our other children (adults) had to remind us that they still liked to celebrate and that Conor would not want us to be this sad.
- Celebrating in the same familiar place may initially feel overwhelming, so consider the healing power of travel. In our case, stepping out of our usual holiday routine and traveling was a truly transformative experience.
- Decide if you can handle an all-day event. Be gracious with yourself and acknowledge that you may only be able to stay for a short while.
- Understand the holiday itself only lasts 24 hours, and this too shall pass.
- Above all else, be kind to yourself.

Christ said in John 16:22, "So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again, and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy." So, while we mourn the loss of our loved one in this world, you can take comfort that, as believers, we will reunite with them. This verse

has been a source of great comfort for us, reminding us that our grief is temporary and that we will be reunited with our loved ones.

Again, in John, chapter 3, verse 16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." This verse reassures us of God's love and the promise of eternal life, providing hope and comfort during our grief.

As the season of joyous celebration of the birth of our Lord and Savior commences, my prayers are with all of us who will be missing our loved ones.