

# RESILIENCE RX™

A free resource

## HOLIDAY TIPS FOR SUPPORTERS

*Tips to helping a  
mourner through  
the season*

*How to keep your own  
battery charged*



**IGI** INTERNATIONAL  
GRIEF INSTITUTE  
INVESTING IN COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

# RESILIENCE RX™

## Self-care techniques

The science behind why they work and  
how to implement them in everyday life



This free resource is designed to provide self-care techniques to support the bereaved with the understanding that the International Grief Institute is not engaged to render any type of psychological, legal, or any other kind of professional advice.



INTERNATIONAL GRIEF INSTITUTE, LLC

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## Holiday Tips for Supporters

“ Steeped in tradition, the holiday season magnifies both the loss and the finality of our loved one’s absence.

LYNDA CHELDELIN FELL

### Grief around the holidays

For most, the holiday season is a cherished time of year when families and friends come together to honor their faith, enjoy a formal dinner, or simply spend precious time together. But if someone in the gathering is mourning, it can turn the merriment into a tense and stressful time.

Because the holiday season is steeped in traditions, memories of past holidays magnify both the loss and the finality that our loved one will never be part of family photos and other traditions ever again. Painful dilemmas such as how to address the empty Christmas stocking or our loved one's seat at the dinner table play a role as well.

### Why your support matters

Grief is as individual as a snowflake—no two journeys are alike, yet the one commonality we all share is that the holidays can be very difficult when we’ve lost a loved one. Offering support and a warm hug is the most precious holiday gift you can give someone who is mourning someone they love.

### Don’t deprive yourself

Give yourself permission to take time for yourself. The holiday celebrations are a wonderful way to recharge your own batteries, and depriving yourself serves no purpose. If the mourner is present most of the time, then carve out ways that allow you to celebrate in private. Even small ways can recharge your batteries. Above all, enjoy the festivities without guilt.

## How you can help

- Recognize that you can't fix someone's sorrow. Loss takes years to process.
- Honor the mourner's choice for how s/he wishes to cope with the holidays, even if you don't agree. They instinctively know what's best for themselves.
- Do not avoid them. If they ask to be left alone, honor their wishes if it's safe to do so. Otherwise, include them in the festivities and treat them as you would any other significantly injured guest: with kindness, compassion, and gentleness.
- Resist the urge to fill their calendar with festivities as a way to cheer or distract them. Just like all healing, grieving is exhausting and the mourner may not have the energy to keep up with all the celebrations.
- If you live or work with the bereaved, their sorrow can quickly deplete your own joy. Give yourself permission to take time out to enjoy the festivities.
- Expect the bereaved to have cranky moments. Pain in any form can easily overload our emotions (it's human nature). Because the holiday season is a busy time and the bereaved begin the season already exhausted, and their emotional threshold for holiday overload is much lower. If you're having difficulty finding compassion during one of these moments, take a breather for yourself and go run errands or do something fun.
- Invite the mourner to help you volunteer in the community. Serving others less fortunate is a wonderful reminder that everyone faces struggle.
- Help the mourner find a way to honor their loved one's memory during the holidays. Treat them to coffee, then "pay it forward" to the person in line behind you in the loved one's memory. Or buy a small bouquet of balloons in the loved one's favorite color and leave it in a public spot for a stranger to find while you both watch discretely. Or help the mourner donate to a cause that was close to their loved one's heart.
- Should the mourner get caught up in the merriment, celebrate with them but be patient if the moment doesn't last long. With time, moments of joy will grow as the rawness softens.



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## A word about resilience

“ Life doesn’t get easier or more forgiving,  
we get stronger and more resilient.

JAMAIS CASCIO

### What is resilience?

Resilience is the ability to adapt to life difficulties—including loss of a loved one. Building resilience through strategies that support the brain, body, and emotions during difficult times can help reduce the damaging effects of grief.

### The goal

The goal of Resilience Rx™ is to offer self-help techniques that trigger positive hormones—dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin—to help support you as you learn to move forward with your loved one in your heart.

### How do you strengthen resilience?

The first step is to take good care of yourself. We can’t always predict loss and other stressors, but practicing self-help techniques that tend to our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs can help us to weather the storms.

There are multiple ways to trigger positive hormones. Use this Resilience Rx™ resource as one of your tools in your self-care toolbox to help lift your spirits and soothe your heart when mourning the loss of someone you love.