

COPING WITH PAINFUL DATES

Grief is a profound, complex injury that is tricky to handle because it bares no physical wounds. And it's also predictably unpredictable. But one thing is absolute: certain calendar dates can be triggering, heightening our emotional volatility. Although these calendar dates come around like clockwork, most of these dates may remain sensitive for the rest of our life. It is something we eventually learn to cope with. Our loved one's birthday, the anniversary of their death, Mother's Day, Father's Day, other anniversaries like wedding anniversaries, are predictably the worst.

WHAT TO KNOW

- Some calendar dates may always remain emotionally charged.**
 - The loved one's birthday
 - The anniversary of his/her death
 - Mother's Day
 - Father's Day
 - The loved one's favorite holiday(s)
 - Most family-oriented holidays
- The rollercoaster returns.** Be aware of the emotional sensitivity you're likely to witness around these dates.
- Go at your own pace.** What felt good last year might not feel good this year.
- Plan for triggers.** Be cognizant of your triggers around these dates and take steps to plan for them.
- Do not expect others to understand.** Certain dates may remain painful for a long time, and others around you may be unaware that such dates remain triggering. Consider educating them about triggers.
- Just be.** Accept that there is simply nothing you can do to stop certain dates from being painful. Be kind to yourself and give yourself grace around these times.

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTION

What calendar dates do you find most painful?

WAYS TO COPE

Acknowledge the dates. Validate and acknowledge to your support circle that these dates are extra sensitive. This will encourage family and friends to extend compassion.

Solitude is normal. If you feel like spending the day in quiet solitude, ask family and friends not to barrage you with questions as to whether you are okay. Remind them that you are not okay, but you'll weather it.

Invite others to do something meaningful. Some mourners might welcome a distraction. If you find that helpful, invite others to join you in doing something meaningful that day.

Enjoy. Celebrate your loved one by visiting their favorite restaurant and enjoying their favorite dinner or dessert.

Take part. Participate in an activity your loved one enjoyed as a way to honor them.

Visit the cemetery. Leave flowers or a remembrance token at your loved one's gravesite for others to enjoy when they visit.

Celebrate. Write notes on balloons and release them.

Adorn a tree. Tie a ribbon around a neighborhood tree in your loved one's favorite color.

Pay it forward. Pay it forward in memory of your loved one. A random act of kindness can trigger endorphins to offset the sadness.

Cook. Prepare your loved one's favorite meal and invite others to enjoy it with you.

Watch a movie. Watch your loved one's favorite movie.

Wear it. Wear clothes in your loved one's favorite color.

Send it. Send flowers or a gift basket in memory of your loved one to someone in need.

Donate it. Consider distributing Blessing Bags to the homeless or a women's shelter. Compile toiletries from the local dollar store into decorative bags and give them to those in need. This is a gentle reminder that we aren't alone in our struggles, and the gift of giving can trigger endorphins to offset the sadness.

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTION

What are some strategies you use to help you cope with painful calendar dates?
