

## HOLIDAY TIPS FOR SUPPORTERS

Dear family and friends,

Holidays are a cherished time of year for everyone. Because many holidays are steeped in tradition, memories of past holidays magnify emotions of both my loss and the finality that my loved one will never be part of family photos and other traditions ever again.

Until my rawness softens, below is a list of ways you can support me through painful holidays.

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

- **Recognize that you can't fix my sorrow.** Trust that I'm working hard at processing my grief. I just ask that you hold the space for me to do it myself.
- **Honor my choice for how I wish to cope** with the holidays, even if you don't agree. Trust my instinct that I know what's best for me.
- **Do not avoid me.** If I ask to be left alone, honor my wish if it's safe to do so. Otherwise, include me in the festivities and treat me like any other guest: with kindness.
- **Resist the urge to fill my calendar** with festivities as a way to cheer or distract me. Just like all healing, grieving is exhausting and I may not have the energy to keep up.
- **Don't let my sorrow deplete your own joy.** Give yourself permission to enjoy all the festivities without guilt.
- **Expect me to have cranky moments.** It's human nature for pain to overload one's emotions. Further, because the holiday season is a busy time and grief is naturally exhausting, my emotional threshold for holiday overload is much lower. If you are having difficulty finding compassion during one of my cranky moments, go do something fun to recharge your battery.
- **Invite me to help you volunteer in the community.** Serving others less fortunate is a wonderful reminder that I'm not alone in my struggles.
- **Help me honor my loved one** during the holidays. We can pay it forward in my loved one's memory. We can leave a bouquet of balloons in my loved one's favorite color in a public spot for a stranger to find while we both watch discretely. Or we can donate to a cause that was close to my loved one's heart.
- **If I get caught up in the merriment, celebrate with me** but be patient if the moment doesn't last long. With time, moments of joy will grow as the rawness softens.

As always, thank you for taking the time to read this.