



# DECEMBER: GRIEF AND LOSS

## – What Caregivers Need to Know –

### The Basics

When we lose someone or something meaningful to us, grief is a normal response. The types of loss may come in many different forms: the death of a loved one (including pets), divorce, changes in relationships (including friendships), changes in health, losing a job, and even moving to a new place. Grief is experienced differently by everyone and can vary greatly. We may feel a range of emotions such as anger, anxiety, irritability, confusion, exhaustion, sadness, or feeling numb. Grieving during the holidays can be a particularly painful time, but you are not alone. Read on for support with managing holidays and supporting your child's grief.

### Managing holidays while grieving

**Change the expectation:** Know that the holidays will look and feel different when grieving a loved one. It is ok that things will look different. Check-in with yourself to make sure things feel manageable for you. It is okay to set boundaries with family and friends, this is a time to be gentle to yourself.

**Try a new tradition:** Incorporating a new tradition into your holiday traditions can bring a positive change. Engage your child in brainstorming new ways to celebrate, or how to incorporate old traditions with new ones. Many families find that volunteering or acts of kindness to neighbors or friends during the holidays bring much-needed lightness

**Find meaningful ways to remember** there are many ways to incorporate memories of loved ones during the holidays. Engage your child in how they would like to incorporate memory into their holiday celebration. Decorating with pictures of their loved one, listening to their favorite music, cooking their favorite foods, lighting candles for them, or telling stories about them might bring their memory into your holiday celebration.

### Additional Resources

- [Handling Holidays after a Death in the family](#)
- [Grief at the holidays](#)

### Tips for talking with your child about grief and loss:

1. When it comes to grief, there is no normal. Assure your child that all their feelings are okay and that there is no "right way" to feel.
2. It is tempting to remind your child to think of the positives, but sometimes this can feel like invalidating or minimizing their feelings.
3. When processing grief, sometimes what your child needs and what you need may be very different. Lean on other family members or friends to support you both to get what you need, whether it is an extra reminder of your loved one or some distraction from thinking of them.