Riverside Trauma Center

Coping with Loss During the Holidays

Holidays can serve as an annual reminder of loss for many people—a reminder what they once had is no longer present. Certainly when a loss is recent, people are likely to experience feelings of grief during the holidays. This is true with the death of a loved one, but also with the loss of one's home and culture which can result from natural disasters or forced immigration.

Here are some tips for coping with loss during the holidays:

- Be prepared for feelings of grief/mourning. Plan ways to take care of yourself.
- Decide what you feel you can handle and let your family and loved ones know.
- Allow yourself to mourn and remember that grief is not a linear process with rules and a timeline, and that everyone grieves in different ways.
- At the same time, allow yourself to have fun and keep in mind that many bereaved people do come to enjoy the holidays again.
- Consider re-examining your priorities. Ask yourself what tasks you enjoy, which ones you might be able to forgo, and which ones you might be able to share.
- Some find it helpful to find ways to commemorate what they have lost.
- Consider telling stories about your memories at the dinner table, burning a candle, or making a toast.
- Think about starting a new tradition or make changes in your holiday traditions that feel comfortable and appropriate to you. Keep in mind family members may have differing opinions regarding changing or maintaining traditions. Talk openly about your expectations.
- Consider doing something special for someone else, try volunteering, or make a donation in your loved one's honor.
- Connect with others.
- Don't forget that support is available. Seek professional help if you need it.