

## When It's Not "The Most Wonderful Time of the Year"

The holidays *are* hard. In fact, they are the hardest time of the year for many people, especially for those who are grieving. Like a shattered glass ornament, grief leaves our world in pieces. Even though we who grieve the loss of a loved one may feel particularly disoriented amidst the rush of the holidays, I do believe comfort and peace can be found woven through the sights and sounds of the season if you keep this *one simple word* close to your heart.

*Remember...*

**Remember why you are heartbroken.** People who are grieving often feel guilt or believe something is wrong with them because they are "not themselves" during the holidays. It is important to acknowledge how painful the holidays are without your loved one by your side. Honor your grief.

**Remember your grief is uniquely yours.** Try not to squeeze your grief into someone else's holiday expectations. Attempting to please others at your own expense will only add to your pain.

**Remember grief is not a season.** Unlike the holidays with a beginning and end, there is no schedule or timeline for grief. Grief touches every part of our lives and is as personal and precious as your loved one.

**Remember your limits.** Grief is exhausting. While some holiday activities can be a much-needed reprieve from grief, always have an exit strategy in the event that you become overwhelmed and need to leave.

**Remember everyone grieves differently.** Grief can bring out the best and worst in families. Judging another's grief frequently occurs in relationships but often leads to discord and strife. Seek to focus on the love that binds you together as a family instead of what could pull you apart.

**Remember the holidays are emotional.** Nostalgia. Music. Memories. Emotional highs and lows are a normal part of grief, even more so during the holidays. However, be aware of what you believe about how you feel. For example, happiness is not a betrayal of your loved one nor is the depths of despair the measure of your love.

**Remember to grieve authentically.** There are no words to convey how painful learning to live this life without your loved one can be. Intentionally and unapologetically give yourself the gifts of compassion, self-awareness, and time this holiday season.

**Remember you are not alone.** Even as our world fills with glad tidings of holiday cheer, you may question if life will ever hold meaning again. If you are struggling, I encourage you to reach out for support or grief counseling. As a bereavement counselor who has walked with others in their pain, I assure you: There is hope. Even the most shattered glass ornament can be transformed into a stunning work of art.

No matter where you are in your grief, **remember** to honor the eternal bond of love you share with your loved one. Isn't love truly what the holiday season is about, after all?

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