

COPING WITH HOLIDAYS AND SPECIAL DAYS*

COMMUNICATE YOUR NEEDS: Communicate your needs and concerns clearly to those around you.

- Discuss the holiday ahead of time with your family.
- What does each family member need to make it a special day?
- What can comfortably be put on hold?
- What changes will make things more bearable?
- Can the responsibility for the holiday be shared?

CHANGE YOUR ROUTINES: A few families stick exactly to traditions, but most families find it helpful to make minor, or very major, changes.

- Having a meal at a different place or a different time can help.
- Going out to eat can ease some stress.
- Opening gifts at a different time or location might work.
- Families who have a worship routine might attend a different service.
- Use your creativity to find an alternative for a holiday ritual you are dreading.

CUT BACK ON YOUR ACTIVITIES: Grief is physically and mentally fatiguing; you may also be experiencing some disorientation or lack of motivation and disorganization.

- Streamlining commitments is an important self-care activity.
- You might choose not to decorate, or change the decorations.
- Consider skipping sending cards or only sending them selectively.
- Gift certificates, on-line shopping, catalogues, and sending checks can help avoid distressing shopping trips.
- Limiting the time spent at social gatherings can conserve energy.
- Give yourself permission to withdraw from an uncomfortable activity.

CELEBRATE THE MEMORY OF YOUR LOVED ONE: The word “celebrate” can also mean “to honour.” Many families choose to set aside a special time or create a special way in which to honour the memory of a loved one.

- Some make a gift or donation in their loved one’s name.
- Others light a candle or put out a picture or photo album.
- A time to share favorite stories or memories can be valuable.
- Remember it’s all right to cry, and also all right to have some good times.

*This handout was adapted from one developed by Kansas City Hospice, underwritten by Prime Health Foundation