

Top Ten Touchstones: Grief and the Holidays

1. **Grief is Normal, Natural and Necessary** — not just during the holidays.
2. Honor and embrace traditions that are meaningful and supportive. Change those that no longer fit your present circumstances.
3. Instead of **presents** this year, ask for gifts that remind you of the **presence** of the person who has died. Ask others to share a positive memory of the person you are missing.
4. Teach others by example that it is OK to mention the name of the deceased, and to appropriately include them in conversation and memory.
5. Mourning is an externalization of grief, or put another way, “grief gone public”. Talk about being sad, and talk about being OK too.
6. Find ways to symbolically include the person you are missing . Light a candle, buy a special ornament, circle the name of the deceased within a heart in your Christmas cards.
7. Be aware of environmental triggers of your grief, like a song (“I’ll be home for Christmas”) or a sight (Christmas tree atop a car).
8. Spend more time than money this season; time is the most precious gift of all. Have realistic expectations that some of this season will be difficult.
9. Loneliness is a challenge for all bereaved people; talking and learning how others have dealt with their loss can be an education and a guide for your own grief journey.
10. What we resist persists. Even when feeling you have little to be thankful for, step outside of your own grief and give something of yourself to another less fortunate. This is a great time of year to volunteer.

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