

PATHWAYS CENTER *for* GRIEF & LOSS

COPING WITH SPECIAL DAYS

Holidays, birthdays, anniversaries and other special occasions can be challenging after the death of a loved one. Many say the anxiety that accompanies the anticipation of a special day can be worse than the actual day. It is important to reflect on what YOU want and need to do, separate from others' wants, needs, advice or input. Also know that no one way will meet everyone's needs in a family. It helps to have a plan, but even then, be flexible and know that you may change your mind on that day. Let others know about dates that are special to you so they are aware of possible rough times and can be there for you. Don't be hesitant to let them know what you need. Consider some of the following ideas as ways to honor your loved one on special days.

- **Allow Yourself a Day Off:** "Grief Days" can be helpful. Having a 'day off,' especially around anniversaries or other special days can be beneficial.
- **Ask Family and Friends to Talk About Memories:** Communicating about the person who died can be a powerful way to remember the person and create bonds between others who are also grieving.
- **Create a Quilt or Stuffed Animal from Clothes:** Whether it is a favorite scarf, t-shirt or tie, you can use clothing to create a quilt or stuffed animal that can be a source of comfort.
- **Favorite Meal:** Do you know your sense of smell is closely tied to your memories? Cooking your loved one's favorite meal can help you remember the person and remind you of the good times you shared together.
- **Have a Movie Night:** What is a movie your loved one truly appreciated? Plan a fun movie night, watch it and take some time to talk about why your loved one enjoyed it so much.
- **Look at Photographs or Important Mementos:** Look at photographs of the person you lost at different ages in their life. Share favorite photos and talk about the memories associated with these special times.
- **Make a Memory Box:** This can be created with any type of box. Decorate it using anything that reminds you of the person and fill it with special keepsakes and mementos.
- **Make a Memorial:** This can be as simple as a few pictures, a small plaque or favorite mementos. Spending time in this space can be a source of comfort.
- **Purchase a Bench:** Some cemeteries allow you to add a memorial bench. Or, if your loved one enjoyed a nearby park, ask about donating a bench in their memory.
- **Plant Something:** Planting flowers, a tree or a bush can be a meaningful reminder of your loved one.
- **Try a Tattoo:** Although not for everyone, a tattoo can be a meaningful way to remember your loved one and convey the permanence of your love.



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