

How to Cope with Grief at Christmas

If you've lost a loved one, the thought of facing Christmas without them can be daunting.

Whether this is your first holiday season without them or years have passed by, grieving can still feel incredibly difficult.

This is a time to take really good care of yourself and do whatever feels right for you. We hope that you find our gentle ideas and advice helpful in some way.

Acknowledge your grief

- This is an important first step in caring for yourself.
- Grief is not one emotion – it's normal to feel a mixture of emotions in no particular order.
- While emotions can be painful, they will help guide your needs and make choices that are right for you.
- Everyone experiences grief in their own way – there is no 'right' or 'wrong' way to feel and no set timeline for healing.
- Always remember that it's normal to grieve regardless of the time of year.
- Eventually, many people are able to experience joy once more at their own pace.

Christmas will feel different – and that's okay

- Waves of emotion can come unexpectedly and it's perfectly normal to let them flow.
- You might find comfort in keeping certain traditions, but you may want to experience a different sort of Christmas this year.
- Experiencing moments of joy doesn't diminish your grief – you can hold both feelings at once.
- Be gentle with yourself and allow space to rest or step back when needed.

Share your grief...

- It can be comforting and reassuring to share your grief with someone who cares.
- Reach out to friends, family or bereavement support groups who will listen with patience and without judgment.
- Be honest about what you need, whether it's talking about your loved one, sharing memories, or simply having some company.
- Express your grief in a way that feels right for you – you may want to talk about it or write down your feelings.
- Grief is deeply personal – it's important to take your time and share when you feel ready.

Keep to a routine when you can...

- The holiday season can disrupt your usual routine, making self-care more challenging.
- Try to maintain regular sleep and meal patterns whenever possible.
- Spending time with friends or family, or volunteering, can provide comfort and a sense of connection.
- If you're spending Christmas alone, try to make time for nutritious meals and self-care.
- Allow yourself flexibility as some days will feel harder than others.

Find ways to remember your loved one

- You may find comfort in speaking to the person you've lost, either silently or out loud.
- Visit their resting place or somewhere that had special meaning for them.
- Share these moments with friends or family, or spend them in quiet reflection alone.
- Look at photos or recall cherished memories to feel a sense of connection.
- Create a small memory book, light a candle or hang a special ornament from the Christmas tree.
- Honouring your loved one's memory can be healing, but it's also okay if you're not ready to do so yet.

If the holiday season feels especially hard, you don't have to face it alone. East of England Co-op Funeral Services can help put you in touch with the charity **AtaLoss**, which helps people who are grieving or supporting someone who's bereaved.

Call our 24-hour Careline on **0800 0744 362** or visit: www.eastofengland.coop/funerals/our-services/bereavement-support