

From the Director's Corner

Tips for managing grief through the holidays

While grief is a lifelong process and impacts us many times throughout the year, some of the expected triggers for grieving are the holidays. The collective joy of the holiday season, the festivities, and the traditions can generate anticipatory anxiety as well as trigger acute grief reactions even when one isn't expecting it. And, if your loss is new, this holiday season will of course be a challenging time. While there is a lot of information out there about how to get through it, we figured there is never too much supporting information. I hope this helps, even a little bit.

- Be gentle with yourself. Grieving is hard work. Get plenty of rest, eat healthy, avoid drinking too much, and take time for yourself.
- Tell the people who love you how they can help you. At The Neighborhood House, we talk a lot about communicating and knowing what people in your life are good at. Going to the right people do the kind of support they naturally are good at giving increases the likelihood of getting your needs met. Talking about what you need is important-people who love you want desperately to get it right. If you want to talk about your loved one, tell them so. And of course, check in with other grieving family members as to what they may need from you.
- Give yourself permission to break from tradition. Holiday traditions for some bring comfort and for others they can be a source of pain and sadness. Either way, it is ok. It is just *for now*. Do what is best for you and support other family members to do the same.
- Have an exit strategy for functions. Grief can surge unexpectedly, or situations can be harder than we anticipate once we are in them. These experiences can catch you off guard, so make a plan ahead of holiday functions in case you need to leave early.
- A change of scenery can be good. Traveling during the holiday season can often bring relief from the intense feelings that are brought on during this time. It is ok to change it up if that feels right.
- Volunteering can be incredibly healing. Consider volunteering at a soup kitchen or some other opportunity to do community service. Helping others is a beautiful way to honor your loved one.
- Accept that the holidays are tough and trust that you will get through them. They will get easier, it just hasn't happened *yet!*

The Neighborhood House invites anyone struggling with grief this holiday season to join us at our annual Memory Feast on November 18, 2018 from 4-7pm at the VFW on Lakeland Avenue in Sayville. RSVP to info@tnh-hope.org and bring a favorite dish of your loved one to share. Let's come together to support each other and promote hope and healing during this difficult time.

~ Michelle Virga, LCSW-R