

# Helpful Hints for Holiday

## Grief

By Teske Vance

The death of a loved one brings about a whole mix of emotions that can be extremely difficult to manage. Grief is a tricky thing. It may encompass any range of emotions, sometimes plaguing the griever with a jumbled mess of feelings, to be left in a haze. It sneaks up on us through the lyrics of a song or the scent of a baked apple pie, which mom could always perfect. It lurks beyond the aisles of the grocery store when you are convinced that you've just seen granddad shuffle around the corner. Sneaky grief confronts us when we least expect it, bringing to light the reality of our loved ones absence, causing time to stand still, while others seemingly move on with their lives so easily.

As the holidays fast approach, it can be difficult to fathom what this year's traditions will be like as an empty chair sits around the table.

*Who's going to make mom's famous cornbread?*

*Where will the family gather this year, now that grandma is gone?*

*Who will pass out gifts from under the tree? That was always dad's job.*

*Should we celebrate at all this year?*

I don't have the answers to these questions, or the many others that may be whirling in your mind as you contemplate moving forward. The absence of a loved one who was such an integral party of family gatherings and celebrations begs us to think about how family traditions are challenged and changed. May the following suggestions bring you hope and offer some helpful considerations as you navigate the weight of the holiday season without your loved one.

### ***Make a Plan***

Do not wait for the day to arrive to determine what your family will do. Make a plan in advance, and stick to it! Ask yourself and family members to think about the traditions you've had in the past and how or if you will continue them. Will someone else need to do the cooking? Will the location need to be changed? These are questions that can sometimes sneak up on us, so consider them ahead of time and make a decision as a family as to how you will proceed. Determine what is important to you and work to make those values a priority. If it's togetherness that you need, then make a point to be together.

***Don't Avoid the Elephant in the Room***

