

As you move forward...

- Learn to look for the joy in the moment – it will be hard, but it is there, perhaps in the eyes of a child or in seeing a flower in bloom.
- Know that your loved one will always be with you in your heart – forever loved, always remembered.
- Continue to take small steps in your journey of healing.
- Never lose hope.

MADD Canada is here for you...

you are not alone. We are just a phone call away.

Call 1-800-665-6233, ext. 222 or email info@madd.ca. To locate your local group, visit madd.ca.

MADD Canada's Mission

To stop impaired driving and to support victims of this violent crime. We're here to support you. We understand. Our services and resources are free.

Contact us today!

MADD Canada
2010 Winston Park Drive, Suite 500
Oakville, ON L6H 5R7
Phone: 1-800-665-MADD (6233), ext. 222
Fax: 905-829-8860 | Email: info@madd.ca

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Holidays and hope

Coping through the holidays



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Holidays can be a difficult time for those who have experienced the death of a loved one. Chanukah, Ramadan, Christmas, Kwanzaa, and New Year's celebrations are filled with traditions and memories. Birthdays, anniversary dates and other memorable dates that remind you of your loved one can be equally painful.

Here are some suggestions for coping with these special days.

Coping with planning:

- Anticipation is often far worse than reality. Be realistic. There will be pain, especially when there is an empty chair at the table, but don't try to block bad moments. Be ready for them. Let those hurting moments come, deal with them and let them go for a little while.
- Plan ahead. Grieving people often experience a lack of concentration. Make lists. Prioritize everything. Decide what is really important.
- Don't be afraid to change traditional routines. For you, everything else has already changed anyway. Try whatever pops into your head. You can always scrap it if it doesn't work or if it doesn't feel quite right.
- Include children in the family in any discussion about the holidays.
- You may wish to re-evaluate the practice of sending cards. Consider seeking assistance from friends, look for different and creative ways to complete the task, or feel free to forego this custom for this year.
- Understand that heartaches will be unpacked as you sift through the decorations, but so too will the warm loving memories of each piece. Don't deny yourself the **gift of healing tears**.
- Hang the stockings if you wish. Some families place small notes inside the stocking and read them whenever they wish. Sometimes it's easier to hang the "special" stocking in a place apart from the others. Do what feels right for you and your family.
- Leave the word "ought" out of the holidays.

Coping with the most difficult days:

- Be kind and gentle to yourself. Be patient with yourself and with others.
- Figure out what you **should** do, balance it against what you are capable of doing, and then **compromise**.
- Take care of yourself, physically. Eat healthy. Rest when you can.
- You could share your holidays with someone, anyone! Visit a soup kitchen or nursing home, spend an evening at the bus station. Doing something may help. There are lots of lonely people who could use your love and caring. Remember that giving to and caring for others is a healing thing to do for yourself. Be careful and responsible, but do what feels right for you.

Remembering your loved one:

- Share the special memories you have of your loved one with trusted family members and friends. There will likely be some tears, but that is okay.
- Consider placing a small wreath or tree at the gravesite, or donate a living evergreen tree to the park, school, place of employment or some other special place. A small one is not very expensive, and being able to watch it grow is a constant reminder of the persistence of life and memory.
- Light a special candle, not in memory of a death, but in celebration of a life and a love shared.

Coping with gifts and parties:

- Accept social invitations according to your desire and energy. Explain to hosts that you may have to cancel at the last minute. When you do attend, leave if you must. You might say, "It's a lovely party, but I'm feeling overwhelmed by grief just now and I need to be alone for a little while," give yourself permission to be honest.
- Try shopping on "good" days (or hours, or a few not-so-awful moments). Do what you can when you can. Smaller shops or boutiques may be less overwhelming than shopping malls. The slight additional cost can be more than worth it. Catalogues and online shopping may be helpful. Sometimes a nicely wrapped big box containing a picture of the proposed gift can service until the actual shopping can be done later (when prices are usually better anyway).
- Hold on to your pocketbook and charge cards. You can't spend grief away, though you might be tempted to try.
- Buy a gift for your absent loved one, and give it away to someone who would otherwise not have a gift. It is the giving, the exchanging of love, that we miss the most. When you share love, it grows.

