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New Traditions: Tips For Honoring Those We Have Lost During The Holidays

(DUBLIN, CA) Someone you love has died -- perhaps someone who used to play an important part in your holiday celebrations. How can you acknowledge your grief and remember of this special person during the holiday season? The following suggestions come from Hope Hospice Grief Support Center staff as well as bereaved individuals who wanted to memorialize their loved one or start new traditions.

Give gifts in the name of the person who died. You can't fill in for someone whom you have lost. Nobody can. But you can keep their spirit alive by continuing a tradition they may have started. Maybe they always gave their grandchildren a new book at Christmas, for example. This year you could give the children a book with an inscription in memory of them.

Remember them in the silence of your hearts. When your family and friends gather this holiday, join hands and take a moment to remember them in a way that acknowledges the death and the passing of a special life.

Hang a stocking or light a candle in memory of the person who died. A stocking could be filled with notes to the person who died from family members and friends. The notes could remain private and be placed on the grave or scattering site, or they could be read aloud when the family gathers for dinner.

Prepare favorite foods of the person who died. The holidays are a time for feasting, for literally nurturing each other through the thoughtful preparation and sharing of traditional foods. This year, if you're feeling too drained to cook, that's OK. Go out to eat. But if your family will be sharing a meal, make it a point to include a favorite food of the person who died. The special dish may spark healing conversation and memory-sharing among family members.



Other Ideas:

- Purchase a small evergreen tree from a nursery, decorate it, and replant it after the holidays.
- Light memorial candles each day during the holidays or use one large candle, lighting it daily.
- Have a special time when the family shares holiday memories of your deceased loved one.
- Offer a dinner prayer or toast to your loved one.
- Purchase a gift for your loved one and then donate it to a charity.
- Hang a special holiday ornament in memory of the loved one.
- Celebrate the holiday on another day, such as New Year's Day.

Don't forget that remembering the life and honoring the death are two important steps toward healing. It may seem easier to ignore the loss or avoid talking about it this holiday but you and your family will feel much better if you acknowledge your loss and incorporate it into your revised holiday rituals.

Although these special tributes may cause some tears, they are usually helpful and therapeutic in your struggle to get through the holidays. For other resources for families and caregivers please visit our website at www.hopehospice.com.

(This article is a compilation of suggestions from Hope Hospice Bereavement Support Center and several anonymous sources)

About Hope Hospice

Hope Hospice, a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization since 1980, provides compassionate care, insight, and guidance as families navigate through the end-of-life process. The team of professionals, many with hospice and palliative care certification, provides emotional and spiritual support and state-of-the-art methods of pain and symptom control to maximize quality of life. Hope Hospice serves families in Alamo, Blackhawk, Castro Valley, Diablo, Danville, Dublin, Livermore, Pleasanton, San Ramon, Sunol and the surrounding communities in the East Bay of San Francisco.

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