



Handling Special Occasions

Calendar dates can trigger many different and unexpected emotions throughout the year.

Special dates can be difficult for those who are grieving. The realization that things will be different now that a loved one is gone can generate sadness, loneliness, and a feeling that it isn't right to celebrate in their absence.

Try the following coping strategies:

- ★ Mark your calendar with all special occasions that occur during the year.

These may include traditional holidays, as well as birthdays, anniversaries (including the first anniversary of your loved one's death), summer vacations, family reunions, and so on.

- ★ Anticipate each occasion and create a plan to anchor yourself.

Decide what you will do and with whom you will celebrate or commemorate that day. Plan to do what is meaningful for you rather than acting out a habit or obligation. Even staying home and doing nothing is perfectly fine. You can always change your plans if you want.

- ★ Acknowledge discomfort certain activities may cause you.

Make changes accordingly, at least this year. You might decide to "run-away" to a completely different setting for the holidays rather than stay at home, or you might decide to forego the usual holiday rituals and activities.

- ★ Include your loved one.

Display a photo, enjoy a special song, cook a treasured recipe, partake in an activity, visit a meaningful place, or use a favorite phrase.

- ★ Use simple rituals to remember your loved one.

Burn a candle, go to the cemetery, place a rose on your table, make your loved one's favorite dish, or do something they would have enjoyed.

- ★ Do something for others.

Volunteer at a local food bank, donate to a charity, or invite a guest to share a holiday meal.

- ★ Keep a manageable pace.

Be sure to rest or nap as needed. Ask others for assistance and divide the workload. You don't have to do it alone.

Be accepting of whatever mood you are in. You don't have to feel or act happy just because it's a special day. If you are having a day that isn't so bad and you feel like doing something, do it! Don't be afraid of what someone else will think. Remember that laughter is every bit as important as tears.



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