

Holiday Rituals

Utilizing actions to memorialize and honor your loved ones at the holidays can channel your grief in a meaningful way. You can take action through a variety of practices or rituals. By preparing ahead of time, you can consider your values, what is important now, the preferred environment and if you want to invite other participants. This allows you some control over the course of the anticipated occasion or day. Here are a few ideas for remembering your loved one(s) during the holidays.

- Give a gift in honor of your loved one.
- Hang a stocking/put out a container in memory of your loved one. Encourage family and friends to fill the container with slips of paper that contain their favorite memories of your loved one.
- Encourage storytelling and share memories with family and friends over the holiday meal.
- Place a wreath or flowers at a place of significance to you or your loved one.
- Create and share a remembrance album.
- Create a place setting at your holiday table for your loved one.
- Write a letter to your loved one.
- Create a special holiday ornament in memory of your loved one.
- Decide not to celebrate the holidays this year.
- Participate in prayer and/or meditation.
- Initiate or participate in a lantern or balloon release.
- Attend a support group or seminar on grief and the holidays.
- Journal about the holidays.
- Donate to a charity in memory of your loved one.
- Light a candle in honor of your loved one.
- Light one candle to honor the past and invite participants to share what they value from their past. Light a second candle to honor the present and invite participants to share what matters to them in this moment. Lastly, light a third candle and invite all to consider and speak of their hopes and dreams for the future.
- Participate in a community holiday event (i.e. a walk or run) to further a cause that was important to your loved one.
- Initiate a hike or walk to a place that you find beautiful or that you loved and treasured.
- Pay it forward. In honor of the love you shared with the deceased, do a random act of kindness to a stranger, neighbor or friend. Add coins to the soon-to-be-expired parking meter; buy coffee for the next person in line, etc.
- Create a playlist of your loved one's favorite music and play it on the holiday.
- Cook a meal that your loved one would have adored. Invite others to bring a dish to contribute to this theme.
- Plant a tree or bush in honor of your loved one.
- Volunteer your time for a cause you believe in or for someone in need.
- Create a compassion day for yourself. Indulge yourself with kindnesses that will nourish your body and soul. Visit a spa, get a massage, eat a nourishing meal, call a dear friend, and rest.
- Create a room or place in your home that is a personal sanctuary. Add color that soothes, cozy pillows and blankets, and comfort in every piece.
- Participate in community memorial events such as *Light Up a Life* hosted annually in early December by The Elizabeth Hospice.

