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Grief and the Holidays: 5 Tips to Help You Cope

- 1. Acknowledge your loved one's presence and absence.**
 - a. Do SOMETHING to acknowledge and remember your loved one. In other words (pardon the poor grammar), "Don't do nothing!"
 - b. Hold a moment of silence, say a prayer, light a candle, arrange a place setting, share memories, visit a gravesite, etc.
 - c. Have a family meeting (include children) to identify ways to acknowledge your loved one. Create one or two new rituals or traditions.

- 2. Accept help. Ask for help. Delegate.**
 - a. Utilize the resources and supports available to you (extended family, close friends, neighbors, community groups, religious organizations, school community, etc.).
 - b. Accept offers to babysit, help with cleaning, prepare meals, have someone else host, etc.
 - c. Task others with baking, decorating, and gift wrapping. Consider shopping online...or not at all.

- 3. Create new traditions.**
 - a. Let go of the idea that everything has to be OK...EVERYTHING IS NOT OK.
 - b. Keep some old traditions, and create some new ones.
 - c. Don't forget (or be afraid) to involve children in the planning. Ask them for suggestions and ideas.

- 4. Prepare for social interactions.**
 - a. Manage isolation. Accept at least one invitation to attend a social gathering, and give yourself permission to decline others.
 - b. Be prepared/plan ahead for interactions. Grant yourself permission to decline invitations to triggering conversations. "I'd rather not talk about that right now."
 - c. Develop a "back door plan," and prepare for inadvertently unhelpful statements from others.

- 5. Take care of yourself.**
 - a. Maintain routines: Drink water, eat meals, take vitamins/medications, exercise, leave the house, go to bed on time, obtain sleep, etc.
 - b. Allow time to sit with your grief feelings...and allow breaks from active grieving. We need both.