

Wellness Articles

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If you would like to be added to the distribution list for these articles, please email: Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca. You will receive a monthly email containing articles for the upcoming four weeks.

An archive of past wellness articles is available at <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/9966.asp>

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Coping with grief during the holiday season

For some, the holidays are a time of joy and reconnection with friends and family.

But if you've suffered a loss, the holiday season can bring up extra feelings of sadness and yearning for your loved one, an object, or a way of life you have lost.

One way that you can cope with your sadness and yearning is to talk about how you feel. Sharing your sadness with people who care about you helps lift the heaviness that sadness often brings.

Other steps you can take to cope with your feelings of sadness and yearning include:

- Look at photos, watch videos or exchange stories with other people about your loss.
- Take part in activities that acknowledge and mark the loss, such as funeral or memorial services after a death. This time of year, some funeral homes and religious institutions offer services to help people grieve, too.
- Surround yourself with people who make you feel safe and support you during your time of grief.
- Actively participate in normal day-to-day activities. Being active and taking part in daily activities keeps you focused in the present.
- Do something for yourself. Often we are so busy taking care of others we forget to focus on ourselves. Take time for yourself this season by doing something you enjoy, go for a walk, or try a new hobby such as yoga or meditation.
- Make healthy decisions. Get enough sleep, eat healthy food regularly and if you drink alcohol, limit your intake. The more you take care of yourself, the better you'll be able to get through each day.

- Practice gratitude. Focus on the goodness around you. Thank those who have been caring and kind to you. Send thank-you notes to someone special or record things you are thankful for in a journal.
- Get help if you need it. Holidays can be especially hard if you are already dealing with the death of a beloved family member or pet, or the breakup of a relationship or end of a job. Talk with your family physician or call the Mental Health Helpline at 1-877-303-2642.

Although it may seem that your feelings of sadness and yearning will last forever, remind yourself that these feelings will lessen as time goes by.

Reacting to others

If you find yourself being overly sensitive and easily offended by what other people say and do, you can:

- Pause for a moment before responding to what you consider to be an insensitive comment or action. Keep yourself from becoming preoccupied with thoughts about an insensitive comment. Instead, concentrate on your breathing, count to 10, or recite a short prayer or poem that calms you.
- Remind yourself that you are under stress and not acting as you normally would.
- Ask people around you to allow you some time to adjust to your new life situation.