

*“What would be most helpful to you?”* These simple words are a thoughtful gift for people who are grieving a death this holiday season. It’s not hard to understand why the holiday season can be harder for those who are grieving a death, but what can we do to make the holidays easier?

Here are some simple tips for those who are dealing with the emotions of losing someone special:

### ***If others are grieving:***

**Ask, “What would be most helpful to you?”** “Can I help with your holiday tasks?” “Would you like to get together and bake?” Allow the person who’s grieving to choose what help and companionship they would like.

**Give them permission to scale back.** The holidays can be stressful and emotional. Tell them it’s OK if they don’t want to buy a ton of presents or send a lot of cards this year.

**Don’t assume you know how they feel.** Ask—and listen if they want to talk.

**Talk about the elephant in the room.** People often tell Agrace’s counselors that the most hurtful thing is when no one mentions the person who died. Loved ones want to know the person mattered and is missed. You might ask, “What was his/her favorite thing about the holidays?” The answers can lead to new traditions that honor the person’s memory.”

### ***If you are coping with loss yourself:***

**Make a plan** (and a spare) for the special day. For example, if you wake up that morning and don’t feel up to going to your daughter’s for dinner, visit with a friend, instead.

**Keep everything the same—or try something completely new.** There’s no wrong way to celebrate your first holiday following a death, so do whatever feels right inside. You can keep traditions that comfort you, or do something different, such as traveling for a change of scenery.

**Talk about it.** Tell people what you wish would happen, so they don’t have to guess how to comfort you.

*Agrace offers a weekly drop-in grief support group at our Madison campus. Advance registration is not required. To learn more, visit [agrace.org](http://agrace.org) and browse our events calendar, or call (608) 327-7118.*