

# THE HOLIDAYS...

*are not so much about opening presents, as they are about opening our hearts.*

*Here are some ideas to get you started:*

*The holiday season is not always greeted with happy anticipation.*

*Some families are faced with the realization that a loved one is no longer present to enjoy the celebrations. The sadness overshadowing Thanksgiving, Christmas or New Year's makes it difficult to carry on as usual. Grief does not go away just because the holidays arrive and, in fact, the feelings may intensify.*

*Traditions may be adjusted to help the family cope. It may be too hard to see the Christmas tree in the same spot as your loved one set it up each year. Perhaps sitting at their dinner table with one seat empty is too much to bear and the celebration needs to be moved to another person's home.*

*As long as everyone can express their needs and compromises can be reached, you can navigate the holidays in a healthy way.*

*When a loved one has died, there are ways that you can still incorporate their memory into your holiday plans. By involving your children in these projects, they can feel as if they have an important role to play and work out their emotions by taking positive actions.*

## *Share a story.*

Spend time talking about your loved one. Recall the ways they used to celebrate the holidays. Take time at the Thanksgiving table to state one reason why you are grateful for having had this person in your life. By focusing on the good times, it helps you to remember that the pain will subside in time and the loving memories will remain.

## *Cook a memory meal.*

Forget the traditional menu and create a meal consisting of your loved one's favorite recipes. Bring your child or other family members into the kitchen and let them learn how to prepare each dish. Taste and smell are powerful memory triggers and the kitchen will give you a way to step back into your treasured times together.

## *Create a memory book.*

Go through old photo albums and create a memory book of holidays past. Scan the photos into the computer and create an album showing gatherings over the years. Print and pass out copies of your memory book when the family gathers. This is a gift that you can give which will be cherished for generations to come.

## *A Special Ornament.*

If you decorate a Christmas tree, select a special ornament that reminds you of your loved one. Gather everyone around and place this in a special spot and share why you chose this particular ornament. If you would like, let each family member choose an ornament and place them all on the tree.

## *Share your blessings.*

In the spirit of the holidays, share your blessings. Buy a gift that you would have given to your loved one and give it to a local charity to distribute to someone in need instead.

## *Give the gift of time.*

If you cannot afford to purchase a gift, then give of your time. Volunteer at a local agency as a way to honor your loved one. Even young children can color a holiday card and drop it off at an area nursing home.

## *Decorate a grave.*

Finally, if your loved one has been placed in a cemetery, decorate the grave. Go to a craft store and make a holiday wreath. Purchase a clay pot and paint, decorate it and fill it with silk poinsettias or other flowers to beautify their grave.

# WE REMEMBER THEM

*In the rising of the sun and in  
its going down,  
...we remember them.*

*In the blowing of the wind and  
in the chill of winter,  
...we remember them.*

*In the opening of the buds and  
in the warmth of summer,  
...we remember them.*

*In the rustling of leaves and the  
beauty of autumn,  
...we remember them.*

*In the beginning of the year and  
when it ends,  
...we remember them.*

*When we are weary and  
in need of strength,  
...we remember them.*

*When we are lost and sick at heart,  
...we remember them.*

*When we have joys we yearn to share,  
...we remember them.*

*So long as we live, they too shall live,  
for they are now a part of us as...  
...we remember them.*

*Take time during the  
busy holiday season to  
remember your loved one.*

*You cannot push the grief away and,  
in taking positive action, you can  
incorporate your loved one into the  
season. It may not turn the holidays  
happy, but these ideas can help to  
make them a little bit better.*



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## WHEN THE HOLIDAYS AREN'T SO HAPPY



*by Nancy Weil*