



# Grief + The Holidays

While our society prefers to acknowledge happiness and joy during the holidays, at Tu Nidito we know those who are grieving experience a variety of emotions during this time of year. We don't want to overwhelm you with information, but we do want to offer some insight on important topics that you may find helpful this holiday season.

## "Shoulds"

The day-to-day is usually full of "shoulds" - things others (and we ourselves) think are necessary. The holidays seem to be a time of year with even more "shoulds" than the day-to-day. Here are some common examples:

- **"You should keep every holiday tradition the same as they were before the death."** We can't speak to this for you, but you and your children can discuss your ideas and hopes for the holidays. Then as a family, you can decide what feels best—whether that means carrying on past traditions or creating new ones. Sometimes, traditions evolve on their own without any special preparations.
- **"You should be happy; it's what your special person would have wanted."** We're guessing it probably filled your special person's heart to see you experience happiness. We're also guessing they would want this happiness to be genuine and not forced on you by others. We honor our special people by allowing ourselves to grieve and experience all the emotions that are part of our grief.
- **"You should hold it together for the kids."** We encourage families to express their emotions to one another openly and honestly. Emotional expression is normal and important for you and your children. It's okay that you're not okay all the time.
- **"You should do what is best for you and your children."** Yes, you should.



## Self-Care

Thinking about what is best for you and your children may involve some self-care. This may feel impossible during the holidays, but it can be a reality. Self-care can be almost anything, so long as it is physically, mentally and emotionally safe for you and those around you. Here are some ideas to consider:

- **Identify and Acknowledge your Emotions:** “I feel sad” may seem like a simple statement, but at a time of year when we “should” be happy, it may feel challenging. Acknowledge both pleasant and unpleasant emotions as part of your reality. Grant yourself permission to feel and express them. This shows your children that emotions are normal and expressing them is important.
- **Consider Your Needs:** When you identify and acknowledge your emotions, you consider your needs. Yes, your needs are very important! Take breaks, plan ahead, and remind yourself that it’s okay that things are hard and not perfect. It’s also good to ask for help from those you trust, especially if it will make things easier for you and your children.

## Honor and Celebrate Your Special Person

There are many ways to honor and celebrate your special person during the holidays. We encourage you to talk as a family about what you would like to do together and individually. It is perfectly acceptable for you or your children to carry out an activity privately. Here are a few suggestions to do as a family or individually:

- Look at photos and videos of your special person or create a photo/video album.
- Spend time doing things they loved.
- Choose a day and time to connect with your special person by lighting a candle.
- Tell stories and share memories. Consider asking family, friends and others to write favorite memories about your special person so you and your children can read them at any time.
- If you feel comfortable, gift some of your special person’s belongings to those you know will cherish and appreciate them.
- Donate to a cause your special person valued or would have valued.
- Buy or create a gift for your special person. Keep it or gift it to someone.
- Set a place for them at the table if your family will share a holiday meal.