



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."** It's okay to keep traditions the same as they were before the death just as much as it's okay to take some time to think about whether you'd like to keep them the same, change them up, or decide not to observe them at all. 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 keep your feelings to yourself so everyone can enjoy the holiday."** We encourage you to express your emotions to your family (chosen or otherwise), friends, and/or someone that you trust. This will open the door to honesty and connection, which will both aid in your healing. Emotional expression is normal and important for a griever, especially during the holiday season. It's okay that you're not okay all the time.



Self-Care

Thinking about what is best for you may involve some self-care. This may feel impossible during the holidays, but it can be a reality. Self-care can mean whatever you need it to as 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. Any emotions that you experience in your grief 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 okay to ask for help from those you trust, especially if it will make things easier for you.

Honor and Celebrate Your Special Person

There are many ways to honor and celebrate your special person during the holidays. We encourage you to spend some time thinking about what might feel good to you. You can honor them by yourself, or see if your friends and/or family may want to join you in honoring your special person. Here are a few suggestions:

- 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 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.