

# Grief Doesn't Take a Holiday in Spring and Summer

When someone is grieving the death of a loved one, the changing seasons can sometimes serve as painful reminders of their grief.

If a child or teen's special person died in the spring when the lilacs were in bloom, the sight and smell of lilacs may suddenly trigger painful memories of the funeral.

Playing a sport or an activity may no longer be enjoyable if the parent who taught it to them is no longer there to encourage them or help improve their skills at the game.

/// For children and teens whose parent has died,  
/// Mother's Day and Father's Day can be painful  
/// reminders that they are different from their peers.



These little seasonal reminders of grief and loss will always occur. So how do you maintain strength and optimism, and not have the grief triggers of the warmer seasons overtake your family's happy moments? **SEE THE TIPS BELOW.**

## HOW PARENTS/GUARDIANS CAN SUPPORT THEMSELVES AND THEIR GRIEVING CHILD OR TEEN

**As a parent/guardian wanting to ease the pain of your family's grief, it can be helpful to be aware and prepare for the grief days that will come during spring and summer. Here are a few suggestions:**

Be aware of the possible sensory reminders connected to grief. Seeing other kids doing simple summer activities with their family can be a painful reminder, especially if your child used to do those same activities with their person who died. You can acknowledge this and use it as a chance to share a positive memory with your child about the person who died, then carry on with the day.

The sounds and smells of spring and summer may bring reminders of the person who died. If your child's mood changes suddenly and you/they don't know why, it may be due to invisible triggers.

Look at the calendar and make note of upcoming events which may be difficult grief days over the spring and summer; awareness is key to getting ahead of a grief tsunami. Make a plan to help yourself and your children get through the day, and have a back-up plan available too. Having multiple options will help everyone feel less overwhelmed.

# Grief Doesn't Take a Holiday in Spring and Summer

If the person's birthday or anniversary of their death occurs in the next few months, know that anticipation of the day in the weeks leading up to it, will likely have an effect on the moods of your family members. It may also be difficult for your child to focus on schoolwork. By acknowledging to children that the day is approaching, and that emotional upset is natural, it may help them to understand their feelings.

If it was a spouse who died, remind your child's teacher of the loss well ahead of Mother's Day or Father's Day. Teachers are human too and may need a reminder to be sensitive to your child's situation, as they likely have multiple children in their class with complex families. Your child may still want to participate in class activities for their deceased parent, or they may prefer to be given the choice to be excused during this time. Providing a choice is key to helping them feel more in control of their grief.

If graduation or another important milestone is approaching, it's a good idea to acknowledge the big day before it arrives to explain that there will be feelings of joy mixed with sadness, because the person who died won't be present. Letting out painful feelings before the day can release some of the tension, and allow the child permission to celebrate their own success on their big day.

Take some time to write a note or card for your child/teen about how proud the person would be of them. Or, consider giving your child/teen

a special item that belonged to the person who died, or a framed photo of them together as a keepsake. This can help them feel that their person who died is included in the day in some small way.

Some may feel dread or anxiety about doing activities that their person enjoyed. It's important to offer children/teens the opportunity to remember the person who died by engaging in existing family traditions, but it can also be great to plan new ones together too.

When you begin to feel happiness in your life again, try to let go of any guilty feelings that might arise. If you're ready to laugh and experience joy again, you'll set a healthy example for your child/teen that it's okay for them to have fun too. Make new happy memories by trying a new activity or taking your family to a fun place or event. This will help build family traditions and memories.

Most importantly, be kind to yourself. Parents/caregivers of grieving children often place a lot of responsibility on themselves to make everything perfect and ensure their children's happiness. However, we cannot control the many mixed and difficult feelings that we, and our children, feel. Let yourself be human and have your own grief moments; this will give your child/teen permission to experience their own feelings too.