

# Grief During Cultural Holidays and Other Special Days

For grieving children and families, celebratory or religious days can be an especially difficult time. While others commemorate with family rituals, the thought of going through these special days without the person who died is often anything but festive. It can be very difficult for grieving parents to carry on with traditions and they may lack the energy and will that is needed during these times. In families where the person who died was the primary income earner, the family may be left to manage on

a tight budget. If the person who died was a child or teen, these days may bring painful reminders of happier celebrations in times past and lost hopes and dreams for the child's future.

**The following are some suggestions for grieving families and the people who care about them, to help make getting through these occasions a little easier and to find ways to remember the special person who died.**

## WAYS TO SUPPORT A GRIEVING FAMILY

**How can we support grieving children, teens and their families during cultural holidays and other special days? Here are a few suggestions:**

- Understand and be sensitive to the fact that grief is a lifelong journey. Whether the death occurred two months or two years ago, the child and family will grieve the loss throughout their life. Celebratory days, birthdays, anniversaries, and other special days will often bring reminders of the loss.
- Reach out to the family. Death makes us uncomfortable, so we may avoid the bereaved out of concern that we will do or say the wrong thing, at the very time they need us most.
- Don't expect the grieving family to keep up with past traditions. They may need to let these days pass by unacknowledged, or they may want to build new traditions/activities moving forward.
- Offer concrete assistance. Parents/guardians won't often ask for help because they don't want to impose on others. You can offer to help with shopping, household chores, or driving kids to activities, as these are often needed and appreciated.
- Grieving children and teens need permission and encouragement to continue having fun after the person has died. Offer to take them on a fun outing. Their parents/guardians may want to come along too, or maybe they'll take the opportunity for a much-needed break and self-care.
- If you knew the person who died, offer to talk about them with the family. Stories you share of the person are gifts you give to help keep their memory alive in the hearts and minds of their grieving family members.