

Significant Days of Remembrance

Mother's Day, Father's Day, holidays, festivities, religious ceremonies, birthdays, the yearly date of your person's death, milestone occasions... for those who are grieving these can be emotionally difficult and challenging times to navigate. They are significant days that sharply remind you of the one who is no longer with you. On these important days, how can grieving families remember and honour the person who died? How can you remember and celebrate the life of the deceased and the important role they played in your life?



HOW CAN YOU HELP YOUR CHILDREN COPE WITH THESE MAJOR DATES?

Prepare yourself and your family.

Many Lighthouse families have shared that the months and days leading up to an important date can feel even more difficult than the actual day itself. Prepare your children and yourself by talking about these feelings of fear and unease about what's to come, acknowledge and label them as a normal response to an unfamiliar situation. Remember that you're not alone in feeling this way, and what can help might be to find ways to cope with the uncertain unknowns. Talk about why you think this upcoming particular day might feel and be harder, than other days. Discuss how we often worry about things before they happen which makes them bigger and scarier in our minds than they actually turn out to be. Prepare simple grounding or mindfulness techniques that your family can do together when the anticipatory dread arises. Belly breathing, 5,4,3,2,1 grounding exercise.

Prepare your child for school activities- do they want to stay in the classroom and make a mother's day card?, while other students make Father's day crafts would they like to make one for their grandfather, help them prepare a script if they'll be absent on the day of the death so when they return they know what to say to children/teachers who ask where they were and/or how they are doing.

Plan - Involve your children in discussions about the ways they would like to remember and honour their parent/sibling. Remember that everyone grieves differently and what one family member wants to do may be totally opposite to what someone else would like to plan. For example, one child may find comfort in visiting the gravesite, while their sibling may find that uncomfortable and would rather remember

their parent in an alternative way. Try to find compromises that work for everyone; "we'll go to the gravesite, but X can wait in the car if he wants to and then we'll go get ice cream from that place your dad loved." Plan some time for yourself so you are able to remember and honour your spouse/partner/child in a way that is meaningful to you and honours the relationship that you shared.

Remember in your own PARTICULAR way

It's okay to be different and to think of unique ways to mark significant days. Do what works best for you and your immediate family and whatever feels appropriate and right to you. If the person who died loved gardening, then spend the day in the dirt planting their favourite flowers. If they loved Star Wars, spend the day on the couch together binge watching several of the movies from that franchise and eating the persons' favourite movie theatre snacks. Have a "yes" day and spoil yourself and your children; just say "yes" to some of the more reasonable requests your child/ren have. Ignore the day if that works best for everyone in your family, and don't answer the phone or set up any Zoom calls.

Doesn't have to be **PERFECT** – if the balloons pop or get stuck in a tree or the ice cream shop is closed try to mitigate your child's disappointment by switching to a different activity or finding the humour in the absurdity of the situation.