

## **Experiencing a First Christmas After the Loss of a Loved One**

If this is your first holiday season without your loved one, you may be anticipating a very different and challenging time. Here are some ways to make your first Christmas without your loved one a peaceful and hopeful time.

**Acknowledge and Grieve Your Loss** – Talk about your loss with friends and family. Acknowledge that this will be a very hard time for your entire family, but you are going to do your best to make it a time to remember and share all the special times you had together.

**Allow Time for Your Personal Grief Journey** – As you walk through the holidays and see people laughing and being joyful, remember that you're on a new journey, and it does not have a set time frame. Remind yourself that grief is different for each person. Some people may want to be alone, and others may want to be around people. Give yourself grace for your personal grief journey.

**Take Care of Yourself** – The holidays are a stressful time for most people, especially those who have lost someone they love. Be sure to take special care of yourself. This may mean that you eat healthy, get some exercise, and make more time for rest. It could also mean saying no to some obligations you feel pressured to attend.

**Start a New Tradition** – A lot of people find it comforting to remember their loved one in a new and special way. I am sure many of you have Christmas traditions you have shared with your families for years. This year, make a new tradition. Examples of this would be to light paper lanterns together as a family or cook your deceased loved one's favorite foods. Either way, make this first and new Christmas memorable.

**Don't Make Any Big Decisions or Changes** – Try not to make any big changes or decisions in your life. Most decisions that result in big changes take a lot of time and prayer. Although you may feel as if you need a fresh start, try to wait until after the holidays or until your life has settled a little more. This may not be the time to buy a new house or car unless absolutely necessary.

**Stay Connected to People You Love** – Surround yourself with people you love and who love you. This is a time to lean into others who will care for you and understand what you are going through.

**Stay Connected to God** – Make your relationship with the Father a priority. Sign up for a daily devotional that can help ground and focus you for the day. Look for encouragement in the Scriptures. God tells us in his word that he will never leave you nor forsake you\* and that he is close to the brokenhearted\*\*. Take comfort in knowing that he understands what you are going through.

\*Hebrews 13:5

\*\*Psalm 34:18