



## **Not Always “The Most Wonderful Time of the Year”**

The winter holidays are generally perceived as “the most wonderful time of the year.” But for those who are facing grief after the death of a loved one, the holidays may instead be a time filled with pain and sadness.

Even those for whom grief is not as fresh, the holidays may serve as an annual reminder of the loss—not only of that person, but of tradition and celebration.

Bereavement professionals working in hospice and palliative care understand how difficult this season can be. They support families coping with loss all year long. Bereavement counselors stress the importance of making decisions that feel right to the grieving person, and giving oneself permission to make new or different choices at the holidays.

Grief experts remind us that:

- Holidays often center on certain traditions and rituals. For some, continuing these traditions without a loved one may be an important way to continue sharing their memory. For others, it may be more comforting to develop new rituals to help lessen the pain and immediacy of the loss.
- While the holidays can be filled with meaning, they can also be filled with pressure and stress because of additional tasks such as shopping, baking and decorating. Grieving people should be encouraged to prioritize what needs to be done, and focus on those projects that may bring them pleasure. Perhaps the gift list can be pared down, cards need not be sent out, or another family member can cook the family dinner this year.
- The holidays can bring opportunities to remember the person who has died in a way that is personally meaningful. Some families choose to participate in holiday events at a local hospice. Others may choose to share special family stories over a meal. Some may find that making a donation to a special charity or volunteering time to help others in need may be a comforting way to honor their loved one.

Hospice and palliative care professionals know of the importance of providing emotional and spiritual support to those who are grieving but most importantly, they remind us that a person grieving should do what’s most comfortable for him or her during this time of year.

To learn more about grief and loss or about hospice and palliative care, contact Hospicare at 607-272-0121, or visit [www.hospicare.org](http://www.hospicare.org). You can also find more resources online at [www.caringinfo.org](http://www.caringinfo.org) or by calling 1-800-658-8898.

*This information is provided by the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization and Hospicare and Palliative Care Services of Tompkins County.*