



HARBOR LIGHT
COACHING



TOP TEN TIPS

to Deal with Grief

DURING THE HOLIDAYS

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I'm **Nesreen**, a Professional Certified Life and Grief Coach. I have always been committed to supporting others, especially during the most difficult of times. In 2013, my sister passed away suddenly. This was a profound loss and to say I was in shock was an understatement. Throughout this period, I found myself questioning how I wanted to spend the time I had left on this planet, and how to use my time and energy to live a fulfilling life and help others do the same.

I began working with a Grief Coach in 2015. With my coach, I was able to work through all that felt unresolved in my relationship with my sister, including the guilt, regret, and sadness that would have otherwise plagued me for the rest of my life. In transforming my own grief, I was inspired to help other people going through loss. So, I got certified and trained to help people work through their own grief.

I created this e-book as a way to answer one of the most common questions I get from my grieving clients: "how do I get through the holidays?" I wanted to offer some suggestions and ideas that came from my own experience, as well as things I've picked up from working with clients over the years.

I hope that it offers you some new tips, as well as reinforce what you may already be feeling but not know how to put into words or actions just yet.

Sending you peace, strength, and light during this, and every Holiday Season!

Warmly,
Nesreen

For most of us, the holidays are meant to be crammed with hustle and bustle. Spending time with your family and friends, togetherness and good cheer are among the more dominant themes of the holiday season. This is indeed a time devoted to socializing with family, friends, and coworkers, a time to go shopping, exchange of gifts, and generally slow down from work. Often, during the holidays, we are expected to be in an upbeat mood and join wholeheartedly in the festive cheer. This may, quite naturally, make the holidays incredibly challenging if you are grieving a personal loss, particularly that of a loved one.



From Thanksgiving, Christmas to New Year's, if you're grieving, you may feel incredibly lonely and struggling with thoughts and memories of the person you loved and lost. Worse still, if your loss was relatively recent, holiday cheer might feel like it's adding insult to injury. The feeling of loss and isolation is xz exacerbated when you find yourself grieving during the holidays. The pain that stems from your personal state is in stark contrast to the celebratory spirit that reigns supreme over the course of the holiday season. If you do go out to parties or gatherings, in many cases, these celebrations will only reinforce your feelings of loneliness and isolation.



What's important to understand is grieving is never a tidy or orderly emotion. It might come in waves but it definitely can't be controlled. There is no one size fits all solution when it comes to dealing with grief.

Everybody who experiences grief has their own, unique grief journey. While we will all go through grief, it may manifest itself in diverse ways. This might include crying nonstop or feeling numb, sleep issues, mood swings, feelings of anger, regret, inability to concentrate, and loss of appetite to mention but a few.





At times, you might find it hard to ask for help. You may even feel guilty or selfish in asking for a shoulder to cry on or someone to sit with you, particularly during the holiday season. In turn, these feelings will underscore your isolation and the pain of being alone while immersed in your grief. To this end, you might start to believe your grief will be never-ending. Grief is a complex range of emotional, physical, mental and spiritual swings of the pendulum. Each day can feel like it's a continuation of yesterday's pain, or like its own unfortunate rollercoaster.



While everyone experiences a distinctive grieving process, you may find your grief includes dealing with issues like anger, longing, resentment, dwelling on the same thoughts and memories, lack of concentration, anxiety, or even hopelessness. Such emotions definitely can get worse over the holidays if your usual routine has to include attending parties, gift-giving, and other celebratory traditions. If the person you lost was a close friend or family member, the memories of his or her attendance during past holidays can loom large. You will have moments when you come to realize they won't be with you again. The pain this thought brings up can be overwhelming. If you're wondering, how you can handle your loss during the holidays, this Grief Guide for the Holidays offers some helpful ideas and tips so that you can continue to process your grief during the holiday festivities.

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Make New Holiday Traditions

Your specific holiday traditions are almost certainly closely associated with your lost loved one. In many situations, you may wish to continue observing them, but this might prove to be too painful. One way you can aim to minimize your suffering is trying something different. So, it can be helpful to try to think of new traditions that you'd like to establish. You may feel some pressure to bring back the various traditions you shared with your loved one, but focusing on doing new things and creating new traditions can allow you to reduce the pain of your grief temporarily, and reduce the pressure on yourself to continue painful traditions.



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Connect with Others

Though you might feel you need some solitude to process your emotions, it can be good to connect with others during the holidays. This is especially the case for those who understand or can relate to what you are going through.

Talking openly, remembering your missing loved one, and making the holiday season your own, can all help you cope with grief in ways you may not have imagined. This means it is vital to put in place a reliable support system which you can lean on during the holidays and beyond. Should you be planning on seeing your family and friends over the holidays, or doing anything that can trigger grief, always ensure you've at least one person you can call and depend on for emotional support.

Focus on Activities that are Fulfilling

If you are experiencing grief over the holidays, it's important to focus on engaging in fulfilling activities, as much as you can. The holidays can prove to be the perfect time to think of meeting your own emotional needs. It can be a good time to get acquainted with new people and engage in activities and events which will bring joy and happiness to your life. Among other things, this can include participating in activities that bring joy to others less fortunate than yourself. For example, you might volunteer at a food or toy distribution drive, your local hospital or nursing home or even an animal shelter. Alternatively, you can submerge yourself in activities which can help you escape from your raw emotions including working out, practicing yoga or any form of recreation you enjoy.



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Remember the Good Times

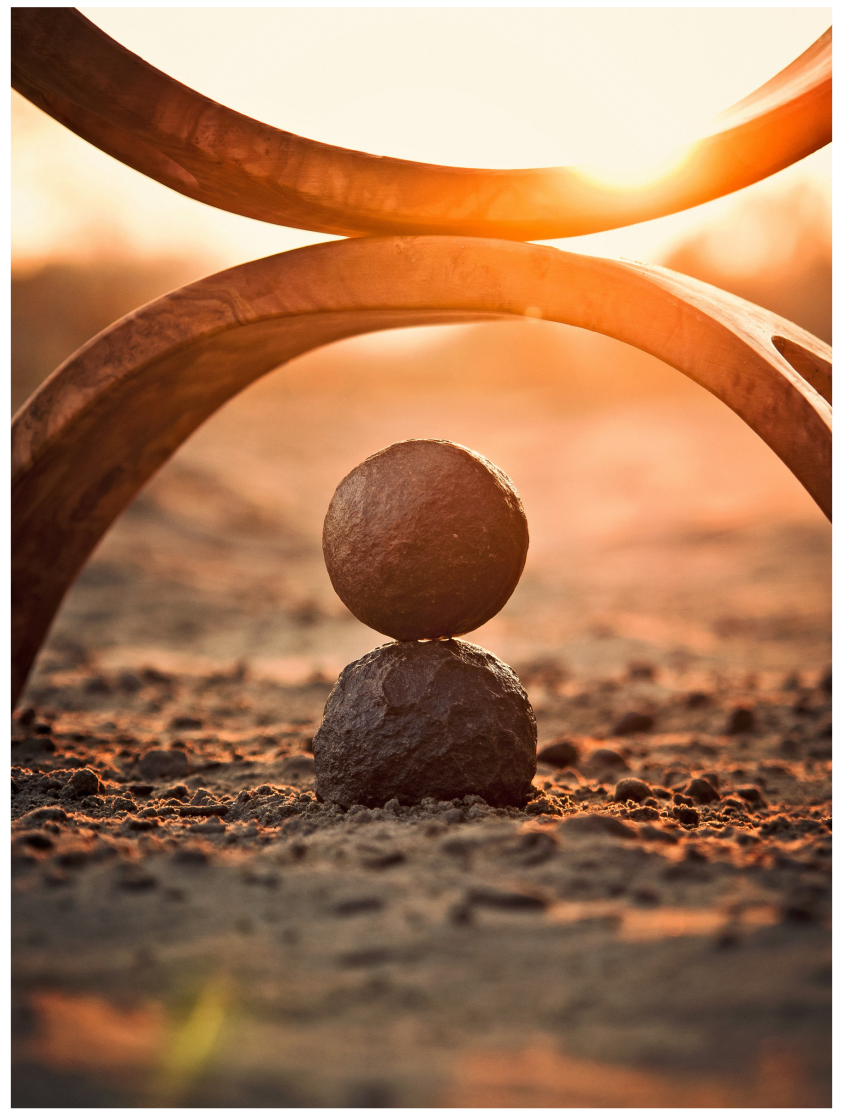
When you find yourself lost in your grief, it can be easy to focus more on the sad and painful emotions and overlook happy memories. However, making an effort to do the latter can go a long way in lessening your grief over time. The holidays can always be difficult for those who've experienced a personal loss.

Yet, by finding ways to fondly remember your loved one, instead of suppressing the anguish, you will create more balance and facilitate for more space for laughter and joy while you are grieving. Therefore, try to remember the memories of the person you lost and particularly focus on what made the time you spent with them special.



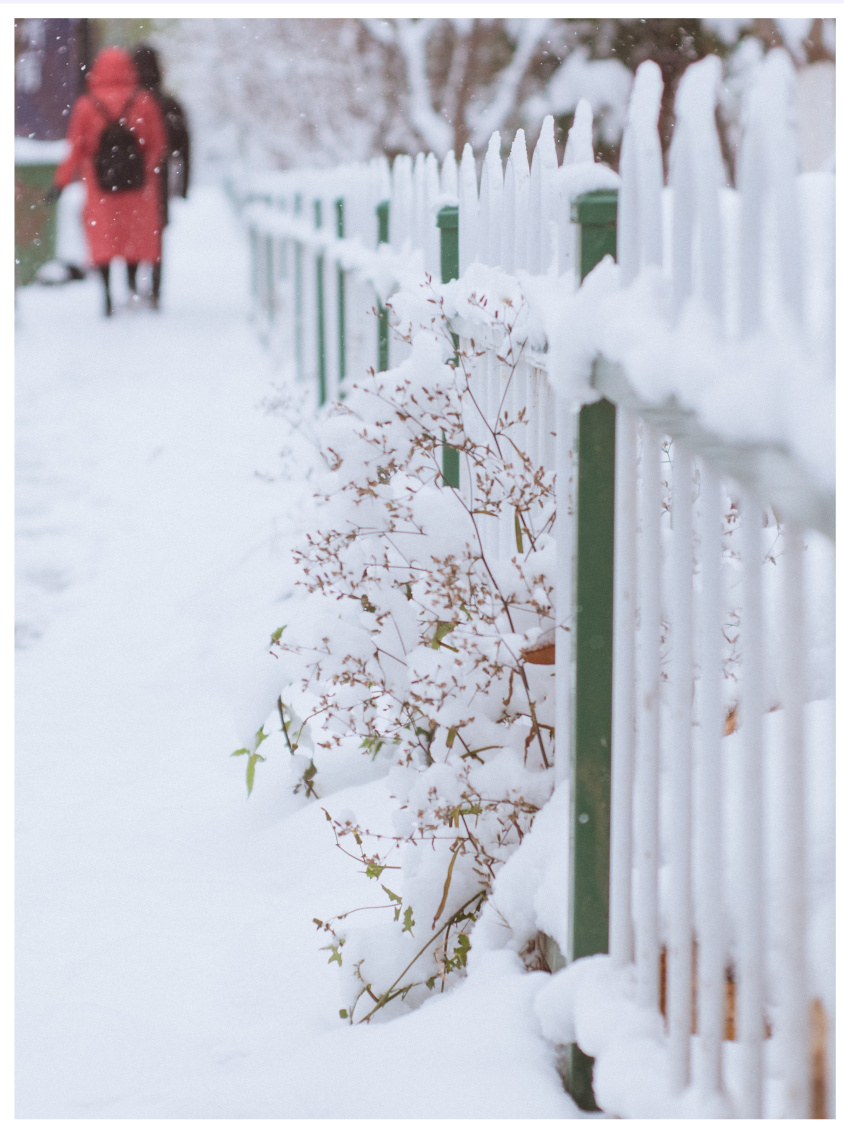
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Remember that Grieving is Necessary for Healing

Contrary to the popular saying, time alone doesn't heal the pain that arises from a significant loss. Rather, how you fill that time while grieving is what will make the difference for you. You won't truly heal unless you go through the natural process of grief. When you attempt to avoid the pain of your loss, it will only prolong the anguish you are bound to experience. But, when you allow yourself to experience pain instead of making attempts to suppress it, you're allowing the healing process to take place. While you can't avoid the holidays, allowing your grief the space in your life during the season can help you get through it.



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Set Healthy Boundaries

You certainly do not need to force yourself to engage in all holiday activities, events or even traditions you'd ordinarily participate in. If you feel like such activities will bring to the fore memories that are too painful, it's okay to say no. Others who may be well-intentioned might try to convince you otherwise, but especially now, you don't have to please everybody. Focus on how you'd truly like to spend your time and do that. Don't let others try to convince you to do things you don't want to do, or do things that would make you feel overwhelmed. Remember, saying no to others means saying yes to yourself.

Concentrate on What You Can Control

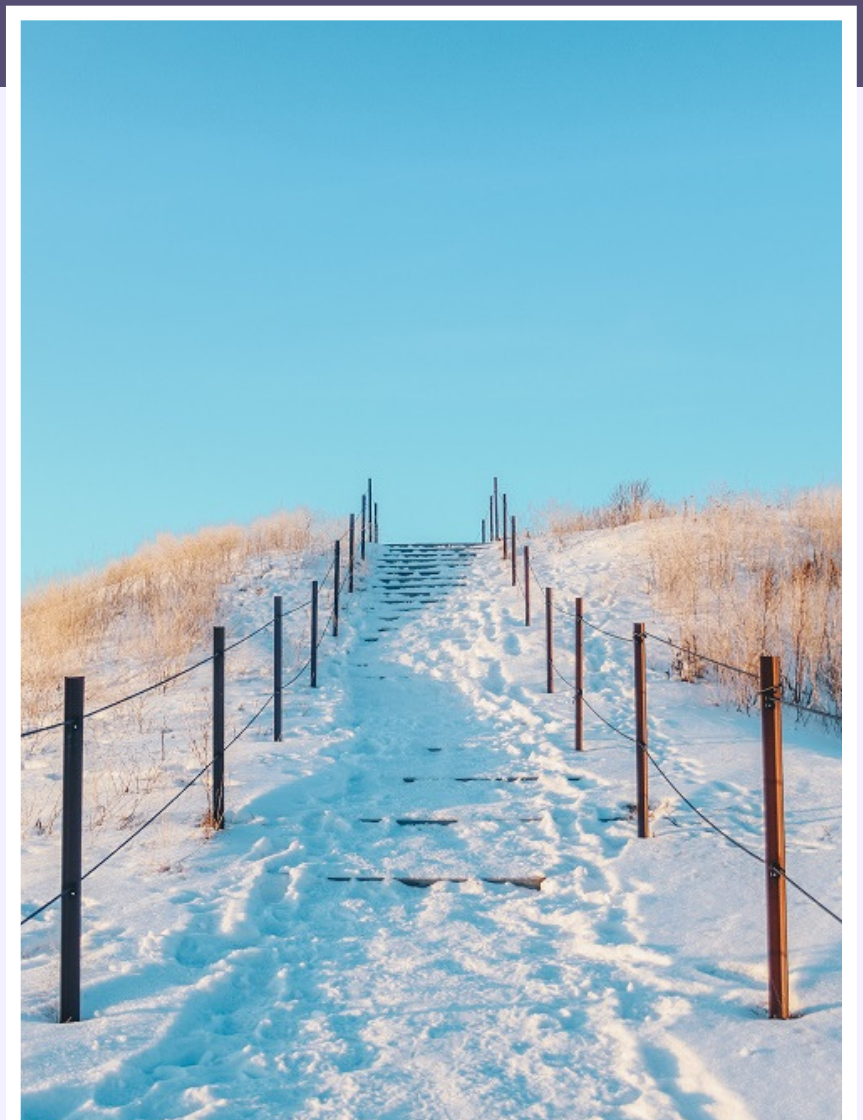
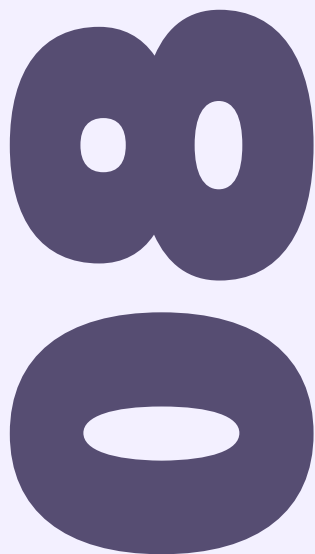
During the festive season, there are numerous things that will be beyond your control. For instance, whether you like it or not, you'll be subjected to holiday music everywhere you go, and often overhear people discussing their holiday plans. Nevertheless, there are still some things that may be in your control. Try to focus on what you can do to lessen the pain whenever you can. For example, it's completely fine to limit your holiday decorations or shop for gifts online. Choose the things you can effectively assert some control over during the holidays.



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Plan Ahead

Generally speaking, anticipating how difficult things might be, can actually be harder than going to the actual event. For instance, you may spend three weeks dreading a Thanksgiving dinner only to find that it took no more than two hours and it wasn't that bad. So, formulate a plan for how you will manage the holidays and events that you're being invited to join. At the same time, it can be useful to create an "escape plan." For example, you can drive yourself to the event you want to attend so that you can leave anytime. Or have a trusted friend drive you home whenever you wish. Also let people know you may cancel at the last minute if you're feeling overwhelmed or unable to go. This gives you an opportunity to decide on the day of, if you think you'll enjoy the occasion or prefer to stay home. Knowing you can change your mind and make your exit easily at any given moment gives you more control and more options so you don't feel stuck.



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Find Ways to Honor the Memory of Your Loved One

You can find special ways to honor the memory of your lost loved one. For instance, it can be as simple as lighting a candle each night or even eating their favorite food. Other ideas include donating to a cause they loved or purchasing a special token in their name. There are many websites that can help you design or make jewelry or other keepsakes from your loved one's belongings. By honoring the person you lost this way, it will serve as a tangible reminder that though he or she is gone, the love you shared with them will never die.



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Seek out Professional Help

Lastly, you might feel uncomfortable talking to your family and friends who may be grieving too. Therefore, it can help to discuss your grief with someone not in your immediate circle, like a Grief Coach, Counselor, or joining a grief support group. Never be afraid of letting others know you're feeling sad, lonely, or depressed. Consider seeking out the kind of services that will most support you this holiday season. Such a professional will be able to offer valuable advice, helpful suggestions, and resources for establishing new holiday traditions that will lift your spirits. An experienced Grief expert can prove to be very helpful and supportive during the holidays and beyond.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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before becoming a member.



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