



# HOLIDAY RITUALS & TRADITIONS

Rituals and traditions serve a variety of purposes in our lives. Rituals and traditions can be a powerful tool for creating shared experience, making space to slow down and process, and building meaningful memories and connections.

The holiday season is a difficult time of the year for grieving families. Celebrating old rituals and traditions without *your* person who died can be especially hard. Because rituals and traditions are so linked to the people we celebrate them with, when a person dies these traditions will inevitably feel very different. This tip sheet will help you navigate through the conversations and planning of ongoing and new rituals and traditions during the holidays.

## 1. START WITH YOU

Check in with yourself first and ask, “What rituals and traditions will help me this holiday season? Which ones am I dreading?” Write them down and make a list. Start here because your thoughts and feelings about rituals and traditions will serve as a filter for all future discussions and decisions with others.

## 2. ENGAGE YOUR FAMILY

Next, go to members of your immediate family. Ask them to make their own lists, and be honest about what rituals and traditions feel important to keep or change now that your person has died. What are they looking forward to? What are they dreading or wanting to change?

## 3. COMPARE LISTS

Set up an intentional time when the whole family is not distracted by homework, TV, or other people. Ask everyone to come ready to talk about the upcoming holidays. Invite everyone to share the things they are looking forward to, and the things they are dreading. What rituals and traditions from past years do they want to keep, and what do they want to change?

## 4. EVERYONE NEEDS TO FEEL HEARD

If a member of your family has different expectations from you about the upcoming holidays, that is okay. Really try to listen and understand first, rather than to try to change their perspective. The goal here is for everyone to feel heard and understood so that you can find a way forward together.



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## 5. COMPROMISE

It is not always possible to fulfill everyone's holiday needs. There may be some conflicting needs within your own family, and that's okay. Try to communicate clearly and work towards compromise together.

## 6. THE GOAL IS CONNECTION

No matter what rituals and traditions you choose to keep this holiday season, try and center them on creating a meaningful connection with your loved ones. At the end of the day, one of the lessons that death teaches us all is that life is short, and the people we love are what matter most.