

HOLIDAY SURVIVAL

Whether you've always loved the holidays, or avoided them as best you could, the first several seasons after a loss or big life event can be hard. So many people want to make this a "good" holiday for you, and that pressure can feel intense. Here are some tips to get you through.

SAY 'NO' A LOT

Really. Other people will tell you you should say yes to things, get out more, be social. But if "being social" gives you the hives, it's ok to say no. Remember that "no" is a complete sentence. You can say "no, thank you" if you must say more.

CHOOSE YOUR EVENTS

If you do choose to attend an event, choose wisely. Sometimes a big crowd is easier than a small one. While a small gathering might have been most comfortable in other years, those intimate things can feel more like a crucible now, with people watching to see how you're doing.

CHECK IN WITH YOURSELF

Take just a minute to breathe, and ask yourself how you're doing. Ask yourself what you need. It may be that the piped in Christmas carols at the grocery store are just too much. Maybe you need to leave now — just abandon that cart in the aisle. Give yourself what you need in that moment.

FIND COMPANY

...or find ways to be alone-together with others. Musical offerings, candlelight meditations or services — check those little local newspapers and see what's going on in your community.

VOLUNTEER

There are lots of places that can use an extra hand during the holidays. Serving others can be a great way to acknowledge the holidays without doing anything big.

HAVE A PLAN

Before you go to a party or an event, be sure to make your exit plan clear — with yourself. Give yourself an out, whether that is a specific time limit or an emotional cue that lets you know it's time to go. Stick to your plan.

LEAVE WHENEVER YOU WANT

Please remember that this is **your** life. You do not have to do anything that feels bad or wrong or horrifying. Even if you agreed to participate in something, you can change your mind at any time. Stop whatever you're doing whenever you want.



When you're missing someone you love, this holiday season is going to hurt. **Companion yourself. Care for yourself.** Reach out where it feels good to reach, curl in when that is what you need. Make this season as much of a comfort to you as you can. It's OK to not be OK.