

FIRST HOLIDAY SEASON

If this is your first holiday season without your child you are probably dreading it, or at least not looking forward to it with your usual anticipation. Maybe you are already asking yourself, “How will I feel the joy of Christmas without him to share it with me?” or “How will I get through Thanksgiving dinner with that empty chair looking at me? Perhaps you just don’t want to think about it, but the thoughts keep popping into your head anyway. Hopefully, the ideas here will help you get through the season ahead.

Let me emphasize a few points. First, know that the anticipation of the day is always worse than the day itself. Secondly, know and accept that it will be painful. Allow yourself to lean into the hurt. It is because you loved that you are hurting deeply now. Let the pain happen and it will lessen more quickly. You probably have had many joyful holidays with your child, so you can expect that the first holiday without him will be difficult.

In order to make this time easier on you, friends and family might mistakenly try to keep you constantly occupied on Thanksgiving or Christmas Day. They hope that keeping you busy will prevent you from thinking of your child. This probably won’t work. In addition to thinking about your child and the holidays you shared in the past, you will feel the added stress of having to put on a “face” for those around you. Here’s a suggestion for compromise that fall between staying in bed crying all day and keeping so busy that you can’t think. Make some plans that openly address the fact that this is the first holiday without your child and you miss him terribly. Tell those you’ll be spending the day with that this will be a difficult time for you, and they can help you best by allowing you to express your feelings. Let them know you’ll need to talk about past holidays with your child and to talk about how you miss him this year. If you explain this to others in advance, it can free you to discuss your thoughts and feelings. Meanwhile, others are spared the discomfort of not knowing what to expect from you, or not knowing what to say to you on this day.

A word of warning! Friends and relatives may see you as “morbid” or “sick” if you do some of the things suggested here, don’t let this deter you if this is what YOU want to do. You must get yourself through difficult days or times in ways that are best for you.

May the spirit of the holidays bring you some measure of peace.

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