

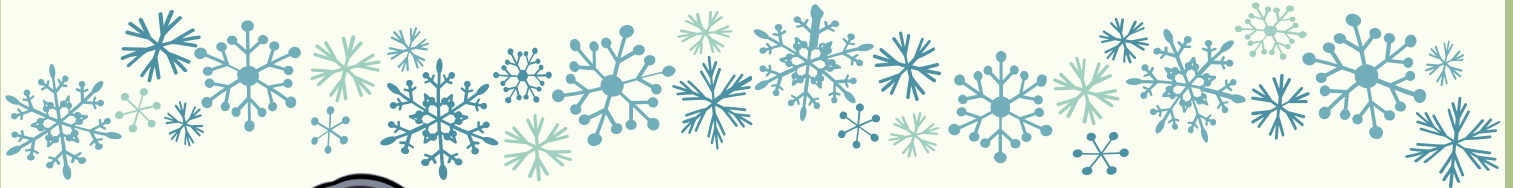
# Navigating Grief in the Holiday Season

## Issue:

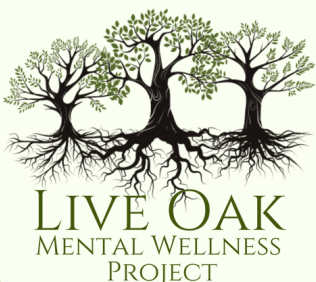
The end of the calendar year is filled with holidays and traditions that often highlight the absence of those who are no longer with us, making it even more difficult to cope in this season.

## Goal:

Prepare in advance by thinking through tricky days and settings, making plans to attend only those events that feel manageable this year, and finding new ways to incorporate the person you lost into your traditions.



You can learn about the realities and misconceptions of the 5 Stages of Grief from David Kessler on his website, [grief.com](http://grief.com).



Live Oak Mental Wellness Project is working to make mental health support more accessible. We share information about improving your mental wellness at home, host mental wellness workshops to practice putting theories into action, and partner with others in the mental health field to create new resources in person and in print to help you learn how to make your life the very best it can be.

[LiveOakMentalWellnessProject.com](http://LiveOakMentalWellnessProject.com)

# Navigating Grief in the Holiday Season

## Create your Holiday Navigation Map

1. **Write down this year's significant dates and events** - Find a quiet place and take your time. Cry as much as you need to.  

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2. **Gauge your bandwidth** - What events do you think you can handle this year? Which events do you need more time to be ready for? (Remember that this isn't set in stone; you can change your mind at the last minute or even after you arrive. Be ready to excuse yourself with, "I need to head out, but it was so nice to see you," or even just a wave.)  

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3. **Know who your supports are** - Whom can you call or text when you need company or just someone to witness your grief for a moment? It's important to stay connected to others even when you feel like you're the worst kind of company. Healing takes time, and you need support.  

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4. **Recall favorite memories** - What did the person you've lost love most about this time of year? What did they hate? What are some of their funniest quotes?  

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5. **Incorporate your person** - If you're feeling ready, what are some ways you can bring the person you've lost back into your holiday traditions? Can you put up an extra photo of them as part of your decor? Prepare their favorite food? Ask others at a gathering to share memories of them?  

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6. **Don't feel guilty** - No matter what happens, things are going to turn out differently than you expect. Maybe you'll want to put up all of your usual decorations but you just can't bring yourself to do it. Maybe you'll plan to attend an event but just end up crying in the car. These are normal grief responses. Give yourself the grace to change plans without guilt. Maybe next year will look different, or maybe you'll still need more time to heal enough to observe holidays the way you want to.
7. **Remember your person with love** - It's normal to avoid especially painful reminders when possible, but it's important to take time to remember the person you lost in loving ways. With time and practice, the memories shrouded by intense pain will begin to be outnumbered by those with love.

You can learn more about navigating grief during different holidays in the "Holidays and Special Days" blog section on [whatsyourgrief.com](https://whatsyourgrief.com), a grief support site by Eleanor Haley, M.S. and Litsa Williams, MA, LCSW-C.



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