

Eight ways to get through the holidays after a loved one dies

The holidays are not necessarily a happy, merry time – especially for people whose loved one has died during the past year, or even the past several years. In fact, if you're one of multi-millions of people who suffer such a loss each year, the holidays tend to increase the feelings of grief and despair.

Over four million people die each year in the US leaving countless loved ones engulfed in grief. If you're one of them, chances are the holidays only accentuate your sadness and sense of loss.

Are there ways to get through Christmas, Hanukah and the New Year with minimal suffering and some level of enjoyment? Richard Ballo (http://richardballo.com/publications_books.php), award-winning author of *Life Without Lisa*, says there are ways to make the holidays more bearable and even pleasant.

Ballo knows this journey first hand. His beloved, 38-year old wife Lisa died just weeks before Christmas. It made the first holiday season without Lisa nearly unbearable. And although he walked through that first Christmas like a Zombie, Rich (RichardBallo.com)

has now found ways that helped him in subsequent years and can help you have a far more positive experience.

Here are Rich's (RichardBallo.com) tried and true tips to get through the holidays after suffering the death of a loved one:

1. Turn to Hospice for help. Hospice is not only for the dying, but for the living as well. Hospice provides individual and group counseling for those left behind.
2. Keep your expectations for yourself and the holidays reasonable. Don't put undue pressure on yourself by "demanding" that you act and feel a certain way. Things will be different and probably not as merry as before – at least for a while. But you can experience some degree of happiness and enjoyment.
3. Feel your feelings. Don't stuff them down. Cry and feel sad. But don't allow them to engulf you. Have a written list of things you can do that will help you feel better – watch a funny movie, listen to uplifting music, play your favorite sport, mediate, take a bubble bath, engage in your absolutely favorite hobby.
4. Do something for someone else. Serve Christmas dinner at a soup kitchen or sing carols in a nursing home. Get outside of yourself and your own miseries and bring joy to others. In turn, it will bring tremendous joy to you.

5. Surround yourself with supportive, loving people. If you're with your family, wrap yourself in their love and caring.
6. Give yourself a break. Don't feel like you have to make the holidays happen for others. Pass the baton to someone else without feeling any guilt. Let someone else cook the turkey and clean up the kitchen. Be a pampered person!
7. Reminisce with family and friends. Talk about your loved one and share memories with others. Let laughter and happy times remind you of your loved one's life.
8. Journal, journal, journal. Write out your feelings and thoughts; commit them to paper. It is a remarkably healing process - scientific research proves it. Journaling will help you get through the holidays and, if you continue to journal, it will take you well beyond.

(AUTHOR BIO: Richard Ballo is a death and dying expert and award-winning author of *Life Without Lisa: A Widowed Father's Compelling Journey Through the Rough Seas of Grief*, available in stores nationwide and at Amazon.com, Abebooks.com and BarnesandNoble.com. He has appeared on FOX Television News, and more than 50 local and national radio programs and has been featured in various newspapers and magazines across the country. To contact Rich and learn more about how to recover from losing a loved one, visit www.richardballo.com)\