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tiffany@luceluzereck.com

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CHAPTERS

turning the pages through grief

Holiday SURVIVAL GUIDE



Courtesy
What's Your
Grief
whatsyourgrief.com

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Written by
Eleanor Haley

Alright, let's have a quick pre-holiday huddle to discuss your game plan for upcoming holidays. Not where you're going to celebrate or what side dish you're going to bring, but what you're going to do if it all gets to be too much.

Big family celebrations can be overwhelming and, once you add the emotions of grief, they can be downright paralyzing. Sometimes even the most patient person, who loves being around family and friends, occasionally needs to take a breather from all the togetherness.

In anticipation of the season, we'd like to offer you a few quick tips for taking a time out to relax, calm down, and refocus in under five minutes.

- **Find an Excuse to Slip Away and Have a Few Minutes of Peace and Quiet.**

As a textbook introvert, I've mastered the art of getting away without anyone noticing. Sometimes all you need is just a teeny tiny break from all the

stimulation! A word to the wise though: Don't disappear for too long if you don't want people asking "Where have you been?"

- **Practice Deep Breathing.**

A quick way to calm down is to breathe slowly from your diaphragm. Try standing up and breathing in through your nose, holding it for a few seconds, and letting the breath out through your mouth. As you breathe, imagine you are filling up a balloon (in) and deflating it (out).

- **Listen to Music.**

Do you find there are certain songs that calm you down? When you feel yourself getting anxious, sneak off and listen to a few songs. You can use Spotify to create your own relaxing playlist, or to browse playlists according to your mood.

- **Have a Cup of Tea.**

Although chamomile and herbal teas are great, any

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When everything seems to be going against you, remember that airplanes take off against the wind, not with it.
—Henry Ford



...continued from front

type might work to help soothe the stress hormone.

● **Get Some Fresh Air.**

True it may be cold outside, but breathing in that fresh air can help give you a change of perspective and reinvigorate you. Plus sunlight boosts serotonin, the neurotransmitter responsible for regulating appetite, sleep, memory, and mood.

● **Stretch.**

Relax those muscles and release some of the tension that's been building up all day in your body. Roll your head from side to side, release the tension in your jaw by opening your mouth wide for a minute, touch your toes, or try tensing and relaxing your muscles one at a time from your head down to your toes.

● **Find Gratitude.**

If you feel yourself starting to slip into negativity and sadness, look around for one or two things to be grateful for.

● **Recognize What You Can and Can't Control.**

Try not to get stuck on the negative aspects of your holiday that you can't change, but take advantage of those that you can. **You can't control the fact that the holidays are different now that your loved one is gone, but you can try and focus on the things that still manage to make you feel happiness and comfort.** Just like you can't force your uncle to stop rambling on about his enraging political beliefs, but you can choose to leave the room and walk away from an anxiety-provoking situation.

● **Hang With the Kids.**

Are there kids underfoot? As someone who frequently walks away from the grown-ups to quietly color or sit on the swings with the kids, I can personally attest to the benefits of escaping the adult world for a little play. Bonus: If the kids are outside kicking the soccer ball or throwing around a football, you get the added stress releasing benefits of exercise. No joke, taking a few minutes to play can be a great pick-me-up and may be exactly the break you need.

● **Lock Yourself In the Bathroom.**

Sometimes it's the only viable escape route! Lock the door behind you, sit for a few minutes, close your eyes, and take deep breaths.

● **Laugh.**

Laughter increases blood flow and can help you to reset a negative attitude. So go hang out with your funniest aunt, tell a funny story, or—my personal favorite—watch a funny Youtube video.

The Lessons of Grief

Readers share in their own words

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My husband and I were very much “Christmas people.” The holiday season was never long enough for us even if some stores start it in September! We would decorate to the hilt the day after Thanksgiving. But when he died suddenly last September I decided to forego the entire holiday. No decorations, no tree. However, a treasured friend of mine, knowing that Menard's (a Midwest home improvement store) is my favorite place, and where my husband and I loved to shop, bought me a small Christmas lighted Menard's building decoration from the store. It was my only nod to the holiday that year and that was enough. Made the season special without the fanfare, which was just what I needed.

—Patty K.

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DID YOU KNOW?



■ **The term “Yuletide” comes from a Norse tradition of cutting and burning a tree to bring in the Winter Solstice.**

■ **December 12th is Poinsettia Day.**

■ **The first White House Hanukkah Party was hosted by George W. Bush in 2001.**



“I got tired of untangling all the lights, so I bought more and just molded them into a tree.”

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