



NAVIGATING THE FESTIVE SEASON

The festive season is a great opportunity to spend time with family and friends, but it can also bring with it stresses of its own. For one, loneliness is a reality and during the festive season, many people who are without family or a partner, or whom have family living abroad can take strain. The lonelier one feels, the less likely you are to include yourself in social events and relationships around you. It's a natural protective response but could leave you feeling worse. Here's what you can do.

1 Get up, dress up and show up.

Resist the temptation to spend time on your own. Get up and get moving, even if it's just for a short while and even if you have to do it on your own. Go to your favourite bookstore or coffee shop or attend a social you were invited to. There are many activities you may attend on the village social calendar. The goal is to mingle and interact with people and feed off their energy and let it lift the doom and gloom inside.



2 Reach out and help someone. Volunteer to help, be it with people or animals. The more you reach out, the better you will feel. Not only will it give you the interpersonal stimulation you need, but also result in a feeling of meaning and purpose in your life.

3 Practice gratitude. Research shows that if you focus on what you have instead of what you don't have, you'll start feeling better. Experts tell us to write down 3 things every day that you are grateful for. Start a gratitude journal- you'll be surprised that it could make you feel a lot better. Share this with others around you and spread gratitude.

4 Healthy grieving. Dealing with the loss of a loved one is especially difficult over Christmas time and during the New Year celebrations. Reminiscing is part of a healthy healing process- we need to remember first before we can effectively move on. Be good to yourself and give yourself permission to make new memories while holding the person and your memories of good times together in



Some healthy ways of grieving

- Spend time outdoors-there is great healing power in nature and remembering that you are part of a wonderful universe.
- Eat, sleep and exercise in a healthy balanced way-keep the routine going even if you don't like it.
- Practice mindfulness-be aware of your emotions and don't try and escape them. They are normal and a necessary part of the grieving process and will ultimately lead to acceptance.
- Don't use alcohol, medication or even food to escape the situation.
- Try one new thing and make one new Christmas memory or tradition. It will give you hope for the future and remind you that this is a temporary season in your life.
- And lastly, be kind to yourself! Be assertive as to what you need and what you are willing to compromise on. Learn to say no to some of the demands on your time and energy and stay true to respecting your own needs for rest and relaxation.

Enjoy a blessed festive season.

Melanie Carstens

Social Worker, Evergreen Health