



The Compassionate Friends
Victoria Inc.

COPING WITH CHRISTMAS

A worldwide organisation.

“Supporting parents, brothers, sister and grandparents
after the death of a child at any age”

The Compassionate Friends Victoria

173 Canterbury Road, Canterbury VIC 3126

Phone: (03) 9888 4944

Email: support@compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au

Web: www.compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au



COPING WITH CHRISTMAS

There is no right or wrong way to cope with Christmas, especially if this is the first Christmas without your beloved child. We have compiled a list of ideas, gleaned from many sources. Hints that other grieving parents have found help get them through Christmas. If there is a suggestion that you feel is right for you and your family hold on to it and let the others go, maybe next year you might feel like trying some other ideas.

PREPARATION

- * You and your family come first, what is most comfortable for all of you is what should be done. Decide how you want to spend the day and let friends and family know so they can better support you.
- * Think about how to answer certain greetings in advance. For example, when someone wishes you "Merry Christmas," you may respond with "I'll do my best" or "Best wishes to you too."
- * Discuss with your family how they feel and what they would like to do. Let them decorate the tree, make the cookies, wrap the presents etc.

Ways to Include Your Loved One's Life and Memories

- * Take time, maybe before dinner, to have a moment of silence to think about your loved one. Ask them if they would like to share their thoughts.
- * Invite everyone to write down a special thought about your child/sibling and place it in his/her Christmas stocking to be read by anyone at any time. This could be a special gift for you and your family to revive those special memories.
- * Burn a candle on Christmas day in memory of your loved one.
- * Buy a gift your child would have enjoyed and donate it to charity to brighten another child's day, or make a donation in your child or sibling's name to his/her favourite charity.
- * Buy a helium balloon and get the family to write messages to tie to it and together release it.
- * Ask everyone to bring photographs of 'Christmases Past'. You might find that the sharing of these photos makes it easier and leads naturally into the sharing of memories of your child, brother or sister as well as other family members who are absent (grandparents, uncles, aunts, etc.)

Changes You Could Make

- * Have a different type of tree, a smaller one, a white one instead of the traditional green, or maybe no tree at all this year.

- * Make a special ornament to add to the tree using craft materials or even a photo. This could be a good way to include younger family members.
- * Change the time of your Christmas meal, maybe dinner instead.
- * You might like to go out for Christmas.
- * Attend a different Church or different service.
- * Do something for someone else. Focusing on others (elderly neighbour, someone with no relatives nearby) for part of the holidays will give you a respite from your pain.

Some Things Not to Do

- * Don't feel you should send out Christmas cards; I'm sure your friends will understand.
- * Don't pretend you do not hurt.
- * Don't make changes in everything.
- * Don't forget that Christmas and holiday times often magnify feelings of loss of a loved one. Experiencing the sadness that comes is important and natural. To block out such feelings is unhealthy. Keep the positive memory of your loved one alive.
- * Don't give yourself the additional burden of worrying about crying. Your tears shouldn't ruin the day for other family members, but will provide them with the same freedom. Remember your crying can't MAKE others cry, they cry because they too are affected by the death of your child or their brother or sister.
- * You might not want to change anything; you may want to keep busy, not have time to think, hold back the pain. Don't get so busy that you will not have time to think about your loved one, it will catch up with you and possibly hit you harder than if you had allowed yourself the freedom to hurt, to yearn, to wonder what might have been, to truly miss them and be allowed to say so.

This list was compiled from many articles from many TCF chapters. The hints were found to be similar in many and some were found in just one; however, the one important thing that was stated in ALL of them was—realise that no matter what we do, Christmas (holidays, birthdays, anniversaries) will come and that the anticipation and lead up is nearly always worse than the actual day.