

Handling the Holidays

Do what you think will be comfortable for you. Remember, you can always choose to do things differently next time.

- Think about your family's holiday traditions. Consider whether you want to continue them or create some new ones.
- Remember that family members may feel differently about continuing to do things the way they've been done in the past. Try to talk openly with each other about your expectations.
- Consider whether you want to be with your family and friends for the holiday, or whether it would be more healing for you to be by yourself or go away (this year).
- Keep in mind that sometimes the anticipation of an event can be more difficult than the event itself.
- If you find it comforting to talk about your loved one, let your family and friends know that; tell them not to be afraid to mention your loved one's name.
- Some survivors find it comforting to acknowledge the birthday of their loved ones by gathering with his/her friends and family; others prefer to spend it privately.
- Some survivors have found the following ritual helpful for a variety of occasions: *Light two candles, and then blow one out. Explain that the extinguished candle represents those we've lost, while the one that continues to burn represents those of us who go on despite our loss and pain. Simply leave the one candle burning (you can put it off to one side) for the duration of the holiday meal or event. The glowing flame acts as a quiet reminder of those who are missing.*
- Above all, bear in mind that there is no "right" way to handle holidays, anniversaries, or birthdays. You and your family may decide to try several different approaches before finding one that feels best for you.

Excerpted from [*Surviving Suicide Loss: A Resource and Healing Guide*](#).