

## 12 Simple Ways to Support a Grieving Friend this Holiday Season

by Lori Pederson

The holidays are upon us and it seems that many people have decided to simplify their holiday traditions this year. Instead of spending hours shopping and getting frustrated at the mall, they have decided to spend quality time with friends and family.

In the spirit of simplicity and kindness, we have compiled a list of 12 simple and memorable ways to support a grieving loved one this holiday season. This list comes from the suggestions submitted by our online community. So take a minute to check your holiday *To Do List* and be sure you have added your grieving loved ones to the list.

1. **Don't be afraid to acknowledge the loss.** One of the most important things you can do for a friend that is grieving is to understand that special occasions and holidays may be filled with both sorrow and joy. A message as simple as *"I know the holidays may be difficult for you. I want you to know that I am thinking about you."* will let them know you care.

2. **Listen and allow the tears to flow.** Allow your friend the opportunity to feel all the feelings he or she is experiencing this time of year.

3. **Allow the person to set the pace.** Grief is a little like a roller coaster with many ups and downs. Your friend may want to cry one minute, talk about fun memories the next and then the next may want to have some time alone. Respect their needs and understand that their change in mood is not about you.

4. **Encourage your friend to talk about the person that has passed away.** If you knew the person, share your fond memories too.

5. Invite your friend to join you for your holiday gathering. As family members pass away, traditions change and a loved one may not be able to spend the holidays with their family. Including them in your family festivities will help ease the loneliness they may be feeling this time of year.

6. **Send a card and be sure to acknowledge the loss.** Don't be afraid to mention the person's name or to include your own personal memories of the person that has passed away.

7. **Visit the cemetery** with your friend or leave flowers with a note for the family at the gravesite.

8. **Prepare your friend's favorite holiday treat** or a favorite food of the person that has passed away. Each year I prepare my mother's holiday cookies to remember her love for the holidays.

9. **Create a scrapbook of memories.** Ask friends and family to write down their memories of the loved one that has passed away and put together a scrapbook of pictures and stories to give to your grieving friend.

10. **Make a donation to their favorite charity** in memory of the person that has passed away.

11. **Encourage them to take care of themselves.** Self care is very important to the healing process. Give a gift of pampering at a spa or prepare a care package that includes a relaxation CD, bath salts, and an aromatherapy candle. If going to a spa is not their way of relaxing, find an activity that brings them joy and relaxation.

12. **Don't run for the hills.** Many people are afraid to be around a person that is grieving. They often treat the grieving person as though they have a contagious disease. A true friend is the one that stands by their friend and allows them the space to feel all the feelings they are going through...the good and the bad.



Offering your support, understanding and companionship during the holidays will be a cherished gift. Be sure to listen to your friend's wishes and do not force him or her to participate in activities that may be overwhelming. Be sure to only offer your support if you know you can truly follow through. And remember, it is the simple acts of kindness that are delivered with an open heart that are remembered year after year.

*"Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word,  
a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring,  
all of which have the potential to turn a life around."*

*Leo Buscaglia*

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