

CALM WATERS



Center for Children and Families

# Coping with Grief Through the Holidays

Wednesday, Nov. 18 | 12 p.m.

Heather Warfield, MS, LMFT

Jordan Park, MS, LMFT Candidate

# 10 Tips for Coping with Grief Through the Holidays



# Tip 1: Plan ahead

- Planning ahead can lower anxiety and stress
- Include children in planning
- Coordinate with previous spouse (if applicable)
- Be informed before attending events
  - Who will be there? How long will it last? Do I need to bring anything?
  - Agree on how to respond as a family to questions or offers of help.
  - Have an exit strategy. It's okay to leave an event early!
- You are allowed to change your mind



# Tip 2: Accept limitations

- Consider scaling back or changing plans.
- Consider doing only what *has been* or what *might be* enjoyable & meaningful to your family.
- Give yourself permission to enjoy this holiday any way you choose.



# Tip 3: Ignore the “should” & “should not’s”



- Don't let others determine what you should (or shouldn't) do.
- Let yourself say YES or NO to plans, regardless of what others think.



# Tip 4: Ask for help, even when it's hard to do

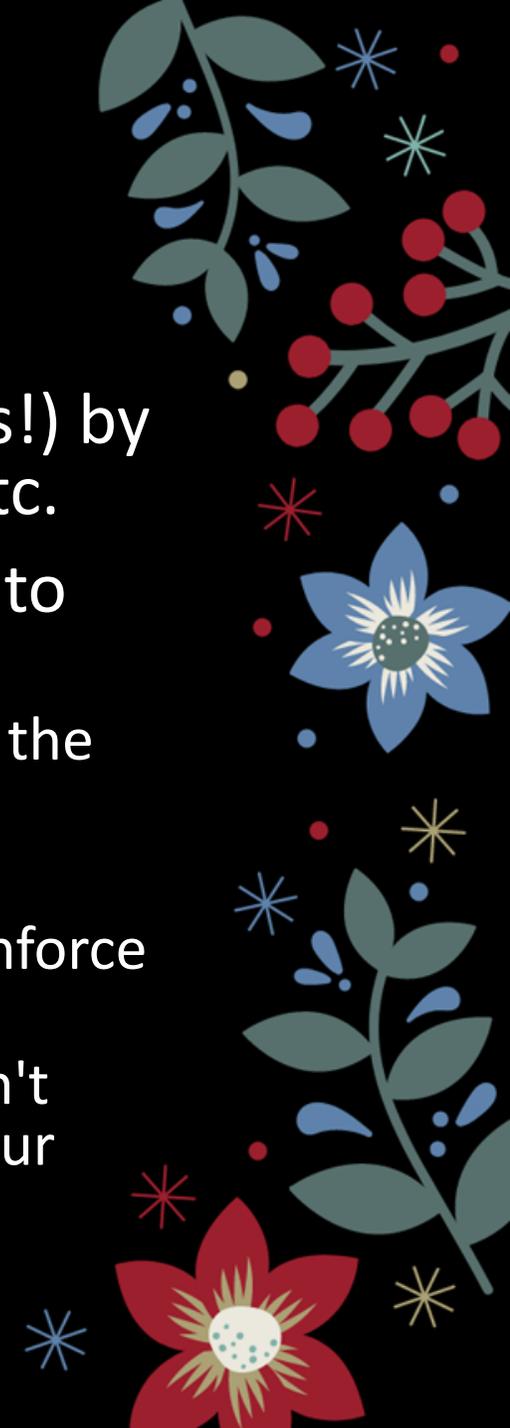


- Allow people to help in concrete ways such as cooking, cleaning, baking, shopping, childcare and running errands.
- Challenge any thoughts about being a burden. More often than not, people want to help.



# Tip 5: Get creative with communication

- Use technology to connect with loved ones (include the kids!) by sending texts, emails, Facetime, Marco Polo, House Party, etc.
- If you are co-parenting, it is important to allow the children to communicate with *both* parents.
  - Make a plan for how and when this can be coordinated to respect the plans of both parents.
  - Be mindful to not infringe too much on the other parent's time.
  - Be sure your texts, emails, tweets, videos, Facebook posts etc. reinforce a *cooperative* co-parenting team.
  - Encourage children to have fun with the co-parent, even if you can't stand the prospect of being alone. Children don't need to carry your stresses.



# Tip 6: Self-care

- Encourage rest and quiet times for yourself and your children
- Eat healthy and stay hydrated
- Set boundaries
- Set realistic expectations
- Give yourself a break
- Utilize your support network
- Talk about your grief. Don't worry about bringing anyone down, or "handling it" on your own. You are allowed to express grief.
- Allow yourself to feel all your feelings. Resentment and anger are normal.

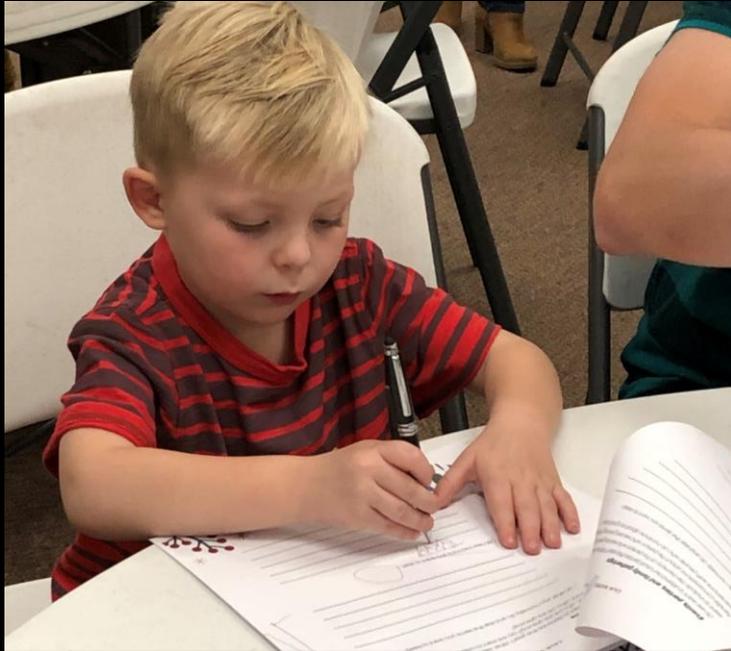


# Tip 7: Cope with feelings as they arise

- Avoid minimizing you and your children's feelings
- Avoid trying to find a "silver lining"
  - Instead, validate and reflect each emotion
- Identify ways to positively cope with big emotions as they surface.



# Tip 8: Acknowledge, change and create new traditions



- Don't ignore the holidays because they seem too painful.
- Decide what works for you and what doesn't.
- Engage with your children in childlike excitement about the holidays.
- It's important that children are given the opportunity to celebrate the holidays without feeling guilty.
- Involve your children in discussions about what they would like to do.
- Establish traditions with your children, even new ones that may be off-time or different from past rituals.

# Tip 9: Find ways to remember and honor your grief

- Ideas to consider:
  - Light a memorial candle. Invite children and friends/family to share memories about the loved one or the change that has occurred.
  - Write a card or letter to the person who is absent.
  - Write memories on strips of paper and use them to create a paper chain.
  - Hang a special decoration in memory of the person, such as a wreath or stocking. If a stocking is used, family members can place cards or pieces of paper with memories inside.

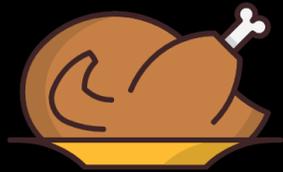


# Tip 9: Find ways to remember and honor your grief, cont.

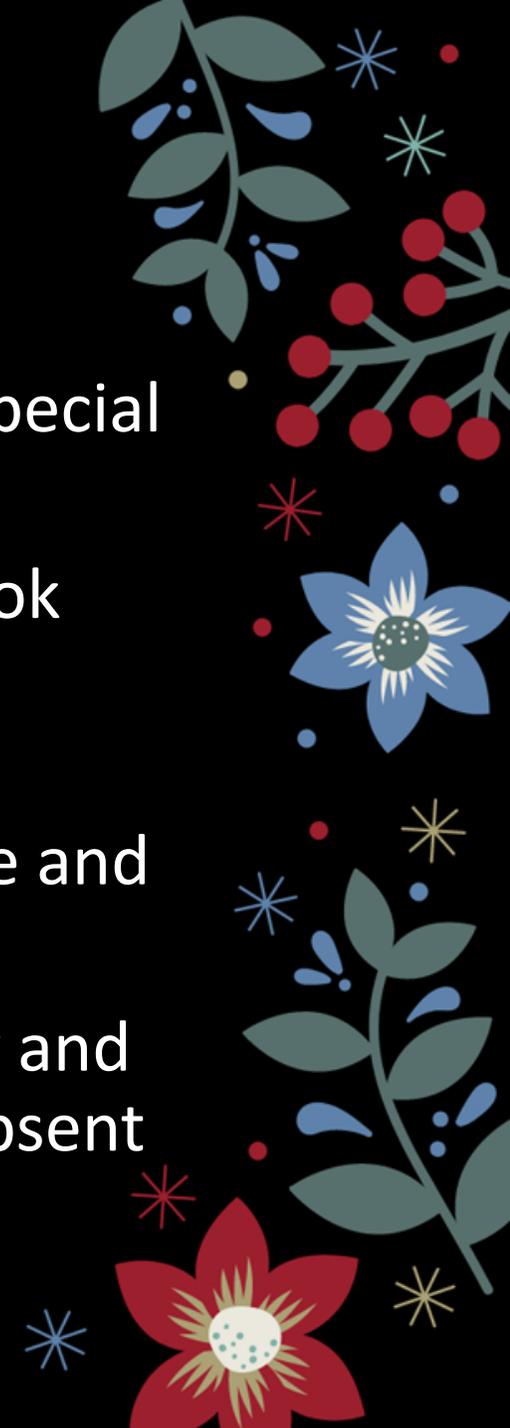
- Gift-wrap a box and make an opening in the top for family and friends to share written memories. At a special time the box can be unwrapped and the memories shared.
- Set a special place at the table during a holiday meal for the person who was not able to attend.
- Create a memorabilia table or corner where you can place photos, stuffed animals, toys, cards, foods, and any other kinds of mementos.
- Share one of the person's favorite foods or meals. Food can be a great spark for sharing memories.



# Tip 10: Consider post-holiday plans



- Consider planning a trip or some other special event after the holidays end.
- It can be helpful to have something to look forward to that isn't connected to the holidays.
- What were your previous New Year's Eve and New Year's Day plans?
- What do you normally do during January and February? What did the person who is absent enjoy doing?



MY HOLIDAY WISHES <sup>FOR</sup> YOU,  
NOW <sup>AND</sup> ALWAYS:

MAY YOU REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE CAPABLE  
OF GETTING *to the* OTHER SIDE OF THIS.  
MAY YOU HAVE A SAFE PLACE *to* LET GO  
*and* HAVE COMFORT CLOSE BY, EVEN IF  
THAT MEANS WEARING *the* SAME SWEATPANTS  
MANY DAYS *in a row*. May YOU HAVE *the* COURAGE  
*to* SAY NO WHEN YOU NEED TO. May you SHOW  
YOURSELF KINDNESS, EVEN WHEN you THINK YOU  
SHOULD BE STRONGER. May YOU FIND NEW THINGS  
THAT BRING YOU JOY, FEEL *in your* BONES *the* LOVE  
PEOPLE HAVE FOR YOU, *and* TRUST THAT YOU WILL  
NOT FEEL LOST FOREVER.

 Emily McDowell  for #OPTIONSTHERE 

# Our Programs and Services

- Grief & Divorce Support Groups, serving ages 3 to adult
- Student Support Groups, serving pre-K to 18, in-person & virtual
- Parenting Through Divorce Seminars
- Counseling, serving children, families & adults
- Family Consultation
- Workplace & Community Crisis Services
- Community Trainings and CEU Opportunities
- Camp Courage, children's summer art camp





# Thank You!

## Q & A

*Please type your questions in the  
Chat feature*

Let's stay in touch!

Facebook: @Calmwatersok

Instagram: @Calmwatersok

CALM WATERS



Center for Children and Families

