

When Your Happy Holidays Aren't Happy

Many of us look forward to Christmas even though we find it stressful to bake, buy, decorate and cook. For some this is a time of heightened feelings of loss. It may be that your relationship has ended, your kids can't make it home, you have lost your job or you are mourning the loss of someone dear.

Suddenly, what was a slight stress seems like an insurmountable situation. How can one cope?

Here are a few tips.

1. **Slow down.** Do you really need elaborate decorations, or make all those traditional dishes? Would the world come to an end if you bought a small decoration instead of putting up a tree. In fact, it doesn't. Send flowers or give money gifts or simply a card or simply pray. People understand that this is not a good time for you so DON'T do all of this and be free of guilt.
2. **Be present.** A wise priest said in church one day that he wanted the day when his head, his heart and his butt would all be in the same chair. As we juggle our loyalties there may be a sense that we should be somewhere else, with someone else. You can't be present if you are worried about yesterday or tomorrow. Try to be present by focusing on your breathing, meditating, be fully present and intently listening to conversations you are having with others. Focus on the little things in the day. Put the cell phone and facebook away.
3. **Honour your feelings.** Allow yourself to grieve and process and then let it go. Stifling your feelings can be harder than acknowledging, honouring, verbalizing them and then allowing them to go. Name the blame, shame and resentment to yourself and realize they are holding you back from your present. You do have the power to let them go. Surrender the negativity.
4. **Change your feelings of negativity to love.** If you are angry that your child would rather ski than be with you at Christmas, embrace them and surround them with loving thoughts. If you are angry at your husband for smoking and cutting his life short because of lung cancer, acknowledge those feelings and replace them with love and acceptance.
5. **Trust the process.** Recognize that this is an experience that you wouldn't choose but here you are anyway. Let go and move on to better things.

Before you know it the holiday season is gone, you have progressed in processing your emotions and a new year is beginning.

Prairie Hospice is a wonderful group in town. It is a volunteer organization that provides compassionate support to people and their families who are facing end of life. 60 families are currently being cared for by volunteers who provide non-medical support.

From Dec 9-19, Prairie Hospice has a Tree of Memories at the Mall at Lawson Heights where you can honour a loved one's absence by placing a card on the tree and take a card home to put on your own tree. These cards are handmade by the folks at Acadia McKague's Funeral Centre. Although this is an event to support people who have lost loved ones and to create awareness in the city of this organization, should you wish to donate, the first 100 people who donate more than \$10 will receive a handmade Hospice Heart Ornament made by Judy Bonn, one of our volunteers.

You can learn more about this organization by going to www.prairiehospice.org.