Surviving the Holidays—Thoughts on Coping

There is no right or wrong way to handle the day. Some may wish to follow Family traditions, while others may choose to change. Focus your celebrations on winter: go to a mountain lodge, go sledding or skiing, or just take a walk in the woods. Take time to enjoy what nature has to offer during this season.

Include the deceased in your conversations and celebrations. Hang a stocking for your loved one in which people can put notes with their thoughts or feelings. Look at photographs. Once others realize that you are comfortable talking about your loved one, they can relate stories that will add to your pleasant memories. Keep in mind the feelings of your children or family members. Try to make the holiday season as joyous as possible for them.

Plan to be with the people YOU enjoy. Do something for others: volunteer at a soup kitchen, visit the lonely and shut-ins, ask someone who is alone to share the day with your family, provide help for a needy family, volunteer at the airport to pour coffee for stranded travelers, or offer to volunteer in a hospital on the holiday. If your city has a Ronald McDonald House, see if you can help make their holiday happier. Don’t be afraid to express your feelings. Allow people to comfort you. They need to feel they are helping in some way. Remember, anticipation of any holiday is so much worse than the actual holiday. Donate a gift or money in your loved one’s name. Try to get enough rest.

1. Decide what you can handle comfortably and let family and friends know.
   • Can I handle the responsibility of the family dinner, etc. or shall I ask someone else to do it?
   • Do I want to talk about my loved one or not?
   • Shall I stay here for the holidays or go to a completely different environment?

2. Make some changes if they feel comfortable for you.
   • Open presents Christmas Eve instead of Christmas morning. Vary the timing of Channukah gift giving.
   • Have dinner at a different time or place.
   • Let the children (or others) take over decorating the house, the tree, baking and food preparation, etc.

Remember: There is no right or wrong way to handle the holidays.

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3. Re-examine your priorities: greeting cards, holiday baking, decorating, putting up a tree, family dinner, etc.
   • Do I really enjoy doing this?
   • Is this a task that can be shared?

4. Consider doing something special for someone else.
   • Donate a gift in the memory of your loved one.
   • Donate money you would have spent on your loved one as a gift to charity.
   • Adopt a needy family for the holidays.
   • Invite a guest (foreign student, senior citizen) to share festivities.

5. Recognize your loved one’s presence in the family.
   • Burn a special candle to quietly include your loved one.
   • Hang a stocking for your loved one in which people can put notes with their thoughts or feelings.

6. If you decide to do holiday shopping, make a list ahead of time and keep it handy for a good day, or shop through a catalog.

7. Observe the holidays in ways which are comfortable for you.
   • There is no right or wrong way of handling holidays.
   • Once you’ve decided how to observe the time, let others know.

8. Try to get enough rest—holidays can be emotionally and physically draining.

9. Allow yourself to express your feelings.
   • Holidays often magnify feelings of loss. It is natural to feel sadness.
   • Share concerns, apprehensions, feelings with a friend.
   • The need for support is often greater during holidays.

10. Keep in mind that the experience of many bereaved persons is that they do come to enjoy the holidays again. There will be another holiday season to celebrate.

11. Don’t be afraid to have fun. Laughter and joy are not disrespectful. Give yourself and your family members permission to celebrate and take pleasure in the holidays.

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Monthly Infant Loss Groups

Listed below are regular meeting times in each region. Meeting dates and times are subject to change. Please call to confirm time and location. Family members and friends are encouraged and welcome to attend.

**Eastern Region**

**St. Louis**

3rd Monday of the month at 7pm
SIDS Resources’ office
1120 S. 6th Street
St. Louis, MO 63104
Call Ellen at 314-822-2323 or 1-800-421-3511

**Western Region**

**Kansas City**

4th Wednesday of the month at 6pm
Call Pete at 816-569-6956 for group location

**South Central/SWest Region—Springfield area**

Call Sara at 573-364-5900

If you want to connect with others who have experienced the sudden death of a baby, please consider joining our Yahoo group. This internet support group is open only to families involved with SIDS Resources—no one else has access to this discussion board. You may share something about your child, your experience, or ask questions. Please email Sara at stamburrino@sidsresources.org and request to participate in the Yahoo group.

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**Special Handling Please**

~Mary J. Pinkava

I was handed a package the other day. It was wrapped securely to be mailed away. Attached to the outside as plain as could be was a simple note for all to see. Please rush through the holiday season; too painful to open for any reason. Contained within, find one broken heart—fragile, broken, falling apart. Tried to go shopping the other day; the hype of the season blew me away. Sat down to write cards; that was insane. Couldn’t find the list or think of my name. People say, “Come over, be of good cheer.” “Celebrate the holidays, prepare a New Year.” But my grief overwhelms me like waves in the sea. Can they cope with my crying, an unsettled me? I don’t have any holiday cheer. Decorations, traditions, big family meal I can’t do this year. Do you know how I feel? Guilty and frustrated! I’ve let everyone down! Our holiday celebrations used to be the best in town. So just ship me away for address unknown. When my grief is better I might fly home.


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**Bi-Monthly Update November/December 2012**
“Memories are the windows that hold the past in view. Through them we can see again each joy we ever knew.”
~Author unknown

Anything you’d like to Share? We’d love to hear from you...

Send us your personal story and we’ll include it in a future update. Remember to include your name, your baby’s name, birthdate, angel date, and a photo if you’d like.

We would also like to hear about any NEWS in your lives. Please let us know how we can spread your word.
Contact us at 1-800-421-3511 or email Lori at lbehrens@sidsresources.org

Let us know....subsequent baby news, new job, a special event, anything you’d like to share. Thank you!
Regional Activities

for SIDS Resources’ event information, visit www.sidsresources.org

Eastern Region
St. Louis

Holiday Memorial Service
Brown Lounge,
Washington University,
St. Louis, MO
4:00-6:00pm

Save the Date
Party with a Purpose
Sat. Jan. 12th
for more information: http://www.partywithapurposestl.com

Blast it out of Busch
Postponed until March, stay tuned for details!

Questions? email Lori at lbehrens@sidsresources.org

Western Region
Kansas City

Holiday Memorial Service
Thurs. Dec. 6th, 2012
Country Club Methodist Church
Kansas City, MO
7:00-9:00pm

Questions? email Pete at ppotts@sidsresources.org

South Central/SWest Region – Springfield

Please contact Sara Tamburrino if you’re interested in a group holiday candle lighting— in-person or via phone or internet.
stamburrino@sidsresources.org

North Central
Jefferson City/Columbia

Holiday Memorial Service
to be scheduled
Please contact Sarah Brown if you’re interested at seb81002@gmail.com

Remember:
find event details at www.sidsresources.org
Click on the event banners on the home page; or go to Get Involved and select Upcoming Events

Bi-Monthly Update

November/December 2012
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We hope you benefit from receiving this update...

Please let us know your suggestions and ways we can continue to improve our services. If you would like to add a family member or friend to this mailing, please contact us.

If for any reason you would like to be removed from this mailing, please call 1-800-421-3511 or email Lori at lbehrens@sidsresources.org

To access support services for bereaved families, or to schedule a SIDS training for professional and community groups, please call 1-800-421-3511 or contact your regional SIDS Resources’ office.

www.sidsresources.org