



# PARISH HEALTH PROMOTION

A Geelong Deanery Health Ministry project -- December 2004

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## MANAGING GRIEF AT CHRISTMAS

### Ideas for coping with Christmas

Christmas may be a time when you get together with family and friends. Often, if you have lost someone you love you are reminded that they are not around. This may be hard and everyone reacts differently to this. It may be that it causes people to react more sensitively to things. Everyone has their own way of coping. It is important that you look after yourself and have your way of getting through the hard bits.

Here are some ideas that may help you better manage the Christmas holidays.

**Allow yourself to be sad** - Christmas may have been a time you spent with someone you have lost. It is normal to feel sad that they are not with you. It may help to take some time out, to remember the person you love. You may want to:

- Find a quiet spot to remember all the good things about the person
- Go and do something that you used to do together
- Write a letter to the person
- Revisit that favourite spot you had
- Share some of the memories

**It is OK to enjoy yourself** - It may be hard to celebrate when you are missing someone you love. It is not uncommon to have a whole lot of different feelings such as sadness, guilt or excitement. Getting together with family and close friends may be a chance to remember the good times and it is OK to relax and have a laugh. Having fun is not necessarily a sign that you miss that person any less.

**Look after yourself** - Remembering that this may be a tough time for you is important. This may mean that you have to treat yourself with a bit of care. Avoid making major decisions until after Christmas is over. If possible, treat yourself to something you enjoy doing. It may be that you:

- Go to the beach

- Go for a walk
- Kick a footie
- Listen to music
- Go shopping
- Have a massage
- Hang out with friends.

**Talk to someone** - Having someone you trust to talk to about how you are feeling may be helpful. This may be a family member, friend or youth worker. If you are finding it hard to cope with day-to-day stuff then it may help to talk to someone like a counsellor. Check out the Finding Help section for more information about what a counsellor does.

The Help Near You section or your local phone book should have details of where to find a counsellor in your local area.

Kids Help Line 1800 55 1800 (free call) or Lifeline 131 114 (cost of a local call) also have counsellors that are available 24 hours a day and the call does not show up on your phone bill.

**Avoid bottling stuff up** - Getting stuff off your chest is important. Keeping things to yourself may mean that the tension builds up inside you. Finding a way to get out what you are feeling may help you to feel better. You may like to talk to someone, write your thoughts down, draw, have a cry or punch some pillows. Check out the Express Yourself fact sheet for more ideas about how to get stuff off your chest.

### More information

**National Association for Loss and Grief (Aust) Inc** (NALAG) have offices in 4 Australian States:

Victoria (03) 9351 0358

Free call for rural areas 1800 100 023

Alternatively call Leonie Deanery Pastoral Initiatives Officer for referral ph 5229 0926 mob 0408 217375

