

How Do I Celebrate the Holidays Alone?

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How do I celebrate the holidays when I am alone? This is a question often posed to us at Alive Alone. Several of our bereaved parents whose only child/all children are deceased face this dilemma. Some are single due to being a widow, divorced or have never married. A few are only children themselves. Others live far from family or the family relationship is dysfunctional since his/her only child or all children have died.

It is so difficult to celebrate the holidays when a couple or single parent no longer has their child/children on this earth. Those with surviving children face the dilemma of the necessity of celebrating with surviving family members when the parents are so saddened due to the death of a child. Bereaved parents who find themselves now childless find the holidays very difficult to celebrate when it seems other family members'/friends' families are 'intact' and our family is now only two people. For single bereaved parents it is ESPECIALLY lonely as he/she approaches the holidays ALONE.

For those truly alone there is no one to purchase gifts for, no one to receive a gift from and no one with whom you can spend an evening or day with during the holidays. We encourage these parents to contact Alive Alone or their local support group to find someone who is in a similar situation so that they can be networked with another person like themselves. Sometimes it is possible for these bereaved persons to get together during the holiday or to travel to meet one another at a vacation site. Just having someone who understands our situation is so meaningful. It permits these parents to share their stories and their children with someone else who cares.

Single bereaved parents may also find it rewarding to work at a shelter, soup kitchen or some local charity during the holidays. Volunteering time at a hospital, Hospice Center, place of worship, recreation center or an institution that ministers to those underprivileged people is often rewarding. Sometimes visiting a place that their child/children enjoyed gives them peace. Perhaps take an individual with you that would not have the opportunity to see this place or attend this event would be meaningful to the parent as a way of commemorating the child no longer with them.

"Adopt" a child or family for the holiday who has been struggling financially in your community and you will find the love and kindness that you share with someone else will be so rewarding that you may want to make this an annual tradition.

Look for other people in your place of worship or community who are also alone, perhaps he/she never married or never had children. Ask your minister, priest or rabbi for names of others who are alone. There are also several adults, which may be a couple or single person, whose children live far from them or never had children and will be alone during the holidays. These people would welcome an invitation to come to your home for a meal. You could spend an evening or afternoon with them or go out for

a meal or attend an event in your community. Check with the local nursing homes for people who do not have families nearby to visit and spend some time with these people who will GREATLY appreciate your presence.

Being alone and bereaved is very difficult at any time of the year but the holidays are just excruciating. Unfortunately these bereaved people are often the ones who also have to do the inviting as others do not remember to invite them.