

October to December 2026

Coping with the holidays

VITAS Hospice Care



- "Who's going to carve the turkey this year now that Grandpa has died?"
- "I don't have the energy or desire to shop, to decorate, or to be around others this year at Christmas."
- "I just want to erase Chanukah this year. I'll just feel too empty without my husband to celebrate."

Thanksgiving, Christmas, Chanukah, Ramadan, Kwanza, and New Year's Day are annual holidays that can be a very difficult time for people who

have experienced the death of someone loved. Memories of good times and togetherness at the holiday season serve to remind us of our loss. Watching others who are feeling thankful and are celebrating when we feel overwhelmed, lonely, or sad can be very painful. Holidays force us to realize how much our lives have been changed by the loss of our loved one. Particularly in the first year, many bereaved are left with having to develop new holiday rituals and traditions.

The first step in coping with grief at the holidays is to acknowledge that the first holiday season is difficult and then to prepare for it in advance by making specific plans and obtaining the support that you need. Remember too, that sometimes anticipation of a holiday can be more difficult than the arrival of the day itself.

Some Tips for Coping with Grief at the Holidays

Set realistic expectations for yourself.

Remind yourself that this year is different. Decide if you can still handle the responsibilities you've had in the past. Examine the tasks and events of celebrating and ask yourself if you want to continue them. Take others up on their offer to help cook, shop, decorate, etc. Consider shopping by phone, Internet or catalogues this year.

Surround yourself with people who love and support you.

Share your plans with family and friends and let them know of any intended changes in holiday routine. Memories can sometimes be a source of comfort to the bereaved. Share your memories with others of holidays spent with your loved one by telling stories and looking at photo albums.

Try to avoid "cancelling" the holiday despite the temptation.

It is OK to avoid some circumstances that you don't feel ready to handle but avoid completely isolating yourself. Allow yourself some time for solitude, remembering and grieving, but balance it with planned activities with others.

Allow yourself to feel joy, sadness, anger – allow yourself to grieve.

It is important to recognize that every family member has their own unique grief experience and may have different needs related to celebrating the holidays. Not one way is right or wrong. Experiencing joy and laughter does not mean you have forgotten your loved one.

Draw comfort from doing for others.

Consider giving a donation or gift in memory of your loved one. Invite a guest who might otherwise be alone for the holidays. Adopt a needy family during the holiday season.

Take care of yourself. Avoid using alcohol to self-medicate your mood. Try to avoid the hustle

and bustle of the holiday season. Physical exercise is often an anecdote for depression. Writing in a journal can be a good outlet for your grief expression. Buy yourself something frivolous that you always wanted but never allowed yourself to indulge in.

Create a new tradition or ritual that accommodates your current situation. Some people find comfort in the old traditions. Others find them unbearably painful. Discuss with your family the activities you want to include or exclude this year. Some examples of new rituals and traditions include:

- Announce beforehand that someone different will carve the turkey this year.
- Create a memory box. You could fill it with photos of your loved one or written memory notes from family members and friends. Young children could include their drawings in the memory box.
- Make a decorative quilt using favorite colors, symbols or images that remind you of the person who died.
- Light a candle in honor of your absent loved one.
- Put a bouquet of flowers on your holiday table in memory of your loved one
- Visit the cemetery and decorate the memorial site with holiday decorations.
- Have a moment of silence during a holiday toast to honor your loved one.
- Place a commemorative ornament on the Christmas tree.
- Dedicate one of the Chanukah candles in memory of your loved one.
- Write a poem about your loved one and read it during a holiday ritual.
- Play your loved one's favorite music or play their favorite game.
- Plan a meal with your loved ones' favorite foods

The most important thing to remember is there is no right or wrong way to celebrate the holiday season after the death of a loved one, and that the best way to cope with that first holiday season is to plan ahead, get support from others, and take it easy

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We now have more than **156,000** people who follow us on Facebook.

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Membership

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Family	\$50
Not-For-Profit Org	\$50
Affiliate Business	\$100

You are now able to do this online at www.sosbsa.org.au (About us tab/Membership) or contact secretary@sosbsa.org.au

Memberships help pay for printing, copying, mailing and our telephone.

Mourning Dove Pins

You can now purchase from us online with payments through paypal

www.sosbsa.org.au ('Items for Sale' tab)

Mourning Dove Pin

Purchase one of our beautiful pewter Mourning Dove pins to honour and remember your loved one

\$8.00 each (+\$3 postage)



or email us at secretary@sosbsa.org.au



The Christmas tree took effort,
to put it up today.
And ornaments
got wet from tears,
I shed most everyday.
I never will get used to this,
you being gone from me.
It's changed the way I look at life;
it's changed our family.
And so I'll try to focus on
the day we'll be together.
And I'll continue missing you
forever and forever.

Anne Peterson

www.annepeterson.com

Presidents Report

(Cherrie Cran)

Hi everyone and welcome to our last newsletter for 2026.

Apologies for missing a couple editions – it's been a tough year.

Membership

If you aren't yet a financial member We rely completely on our membership fees and donations to operate and provide support to those who need us. Please join or renew your membership at <http://sosbsa.org.au/membership>.

Newsletters

We are always looking for content and would love to hear from you. If any of you would like to share anything with our readers about your experiences or life after your loss, please write to us at secretary@sosbsa.org.au.

Facebook

Our Facebook page now has over 156,000 followers from around the globe – if you haven't yet found us – please join us there. Our page is a public page and will remain so, just be aware that if you post / share on our page that your friends will be able to see your posts.

Take care

Cherrie xoxo



Brisbane Xmas Event 2026



Saturday 5th December 2026

12noon

Club Southside Mt Gravatt

76 Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Rd

Upper Mount Gravatt

RSVP: secretary@sosbsa.org.au

Explaining Suicide to Children

One of the most challenging types of loss a bereavement counsellor or therapist will be faced with is that of a family dealing with a death by suicide. Each member of the family will experience their grief differently depending on a myriad of factors. These factors include the person's relationship to the deceased, factors regarding the circumstances of the death, previous history of loss, as well personality factors. In addition to their intra-personal responses, they may be encountering environmental changes which could include a withdrawal of social support or the "conspiracy of silence," financial hardships, and so forth.

When death is a result of suicide, the task of telling children is even more difficult than for other types of death. The immediate aftermath of the death is a time of confusion and intense emotion for everyone involved and families may seek guidance on what to tell children and how much to involve children in the funerary rituals.

Regardless of the age of the child, it is always important to offer simple, truthful explanations about the cause of the death. Accurate information is crucial to the grieving process, and without the facts children will have difficulty with the first task of mourning, accepting the reality of the death as identified by the leading authority on grief, Dr. J. William Worden. Regardless of age, involving the children in the funerary rituals will also help them with this task. Children will follow the lead of the adults in their life and if adequately prepared for the funeral will generally find the support of their community and rituals to be very comforting.

The following examples are helpful tools for explaining suicide to children and helping them on their journey toward healing:

For very young children:

- First explain, "the person that died had been feeling very, very sad and could not think of any other way to end the pain/sadness."
- Explain what he/she did to end their life, "she took a whole bottle of pills which made her body stop working and then she died" or "he used a gun to make his body stop working, and then he died."
- Always end with saying that there was a better way to solve this problem.
- While most people who are depressed are not suicidal, most suicidal people are depressed. Therefore, for school aged children one might say: "Mommy had a disease called depression which made her feel sad and/or angry. Because of the disease she could not think clearly like we do, so she could not think of any other way to get help or end her pain except to end her own life."

Words to Use

- ▶ **Suicide:** The act of killing yourself so that your body won't work anymore. People who kill themselves often do so because they feel there is no other way to solve their problems or to end the pain they are feeling. Sometimes they feel hopeless that things will never get better and that life is not worth living. But there is always another answer.
- ▶ **Death:** When a person's body stops working.
- ▶ **Depression:** Extreme feelings of sadness and hopelessness that lasts a long time.
- ▶ **Guilt:** Something we feel when we think we have done something wrong or are the cause of something bad happening.
- ▶ **Grief:** Natural feelings when someone close to us has died.



- Again, conclude by reminding a child there is always someone willing to help and suicide, or the act of making your body stop working, is not the right answer.

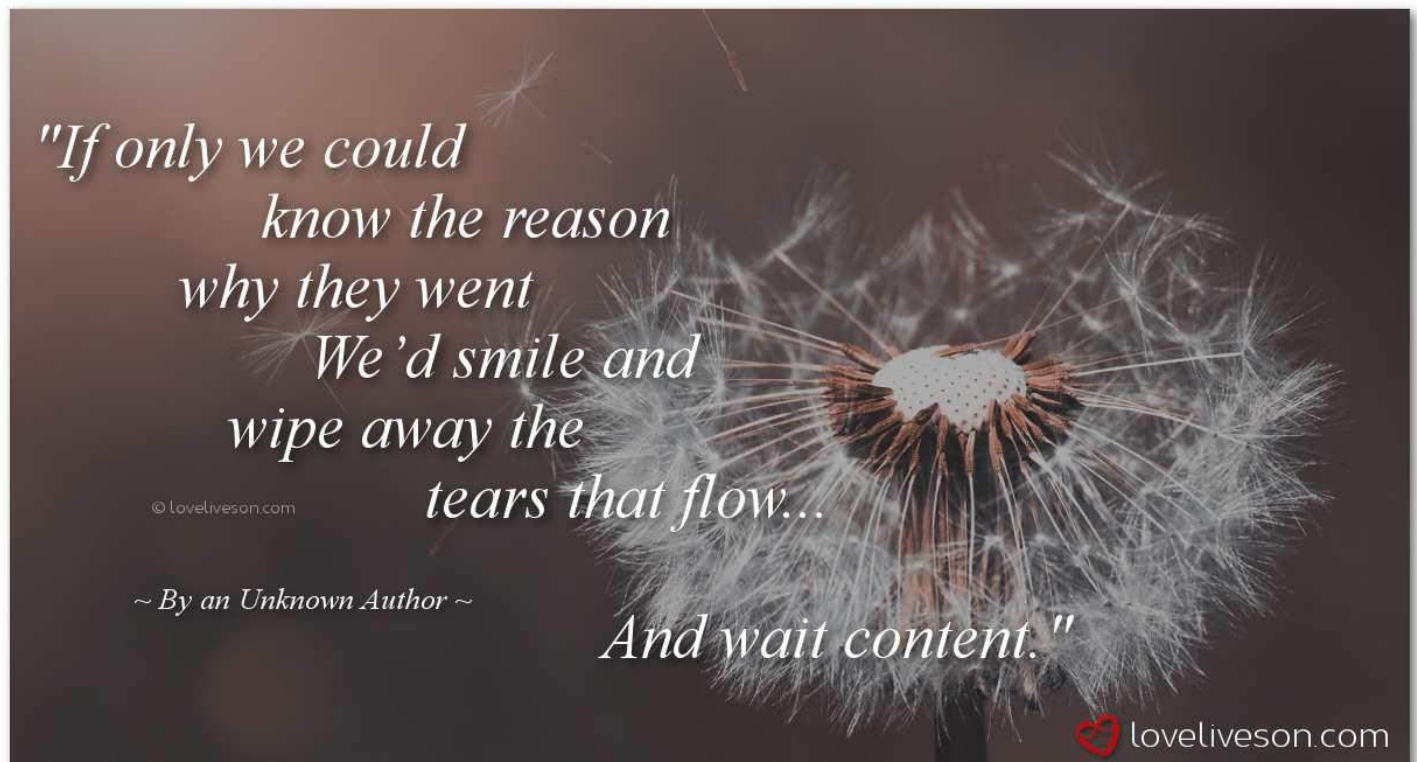
When speaking with adolescents, one might remember:

- It is important to be both truthful and thorough in explanations while remembering to emphasize that the adolescent is not to blame.
- Developmentally, an adolescent is on a course of individuating and separating from the family. It is important to remember that expecting them to assume parental or adult responsibilities prematurely because of the absence of the deceased could interfere with this natural and imperative developmental outcome.

Children will eventually learn the truth, and it is always preferable for a child to hear the truth from the person they trust most in the safest setting possible. To minimize confusion and anger, this conversation should take place before the child returns to school so they will be prepared for the questions and comments of their peers. If children don't learn the truth until adulthood, they may feel betrayed by those they trusted.

A child may experience the act of a parental suicide personally. This often affects their sense of self-worth and creates feelings of abandonment. Unexpressed anger, guilt, and shame can impair the child's ability to form meaningful relationships in the future. Fortunately, on a positive note, Harvard researcher Phyllis Silverman (2001) found that most childhood grief survivors are able to remain committed in relationships.

Bereavement counsellors will often remind child survivors of suicide that the person who died loved them and that the death is not the child's fault. Another way to help children is to keep memories of happy times alive in conversation, keep photos and personal belongings of the person that died on hand, and by making a memory box or album.



Brisbane Support Group

(Lvl 1, 493 Ipswich Road Annerley)

Group: 3rd Friday of each month at 7:30pm

Oct 16; Nov 20; Dec 18

Coffee: 1st Saturday of each month at 10:30am

Oct 3; Nov 7; Dec 5

RSVP through sosbsa.org.au/brisbane

Management Committee

President:	Cherrie Cran
Vice President:	Donna Lang
Treasurer:	Darrin Larney
Secretary:	Sue Dignan
Committee:	Ray O'Brien
	Julie Ferguson

Other SOSBSA Support Group Meetings

Support Groups Update

Please see the update on our Support Groups in the Presidents Report, and check the website at <https://sosbsa.org.au/support-groups>. The information on the website will always be up-to-date. Alternatively please email us or reach out on Facebook.

Townsville Support Group

Selectability House

59A Cambridge St, Vincent, Qld 4814

Monday of every month at **7:00pm**

Coffee Catch up: 10.00am 3rd Saturday of each month

Contact Ray: 0407 490 965

or Geoff & Lowell: 0438 604 744

Support Group dates:

October - 12

November - 2

December - 7

Coffee Catch up Dates:

October - 17

November - 21

December - 19

Details: sosbsa.org.au/townsville

Online Support Group

This group is for those living in regional Queensland and who don't have access to a face-to-face group.

3rd Monday of every month at **6:30pm**

Please register through the website :

[Online - sosbsa.org.au](https://sosbsa.org.au)

Support Group dates:

October - 19

November - 16

December - 14

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In Memoriam



For everyone whose anniversary of their loved one is during October to December.

On this anniversary of your loved one's death, may you remember the best experiences you shared, the most meaningful words that were spoken, the happiest moments you had together and the comfort that has given you the courage to go on.

*If you would like an 'in memoriam' included on this page,
please send an anniversary record to us at secretary@sosbsa.org.au.*



Helplines

QLD Helplines

Standby Brisbane 07 3250 1856

Standby Response Service 0438 150 180

(24-hour mobile crisis response to suicide bereavement.)

Sunshine and Cooloola Coasts 0407 766 961

National Helplines

Suicide Callback Line: 1300 659 467 (24 hour)

LifeLine: 13 11 14 (24 hour)

Mensline: 1300 789 978 (24 hour)

National Hope Line: 1300 467 354 (24-hour bereavement support)

Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636

Kids Help Line: 1800 55 1800 (24 hour)

SANE Helpline: 1800 18 SANE (M-F 9am-5pm)