

# SIX ACTIVITIES TO HELP CHILDREN COPE WITH LOSS

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It's a delicate balance to create new traditions while still honouring memories of a loved one during the Christmas season. Simplify the holidays this year and spend time with family.

Grieving may be a journey your family starts during the holidays. Parents and other family members can often be the most helpful. As a mother, and someone who lost my mother at a young age, I have compiled these activities for parents to help children cope with loss. We must acknowledge the reality of the death to be able to cope with it. Gentle, real, and honest conversation will eventually help the child as they think through and feel through the grieving process.

## KEEPING THE MEMORIES ALIVE

It's extremely important to keep memories of a loved one alive. I didn't! When I turned forty, I sent letters to family, friends, and neighbours asking for stories and photos of my mom. As a result, I have a beautiful scrapbook of photos, stories, and letters. It is an amazing way for me to celebrate my mom's life and to pass the memories along to my daughter.



## RECORD STORIES AND MEMORIES TOGETHER

Everyone deals with grief differently, and children are no exception. Sometimes simply being available to listen is enough. Listening and being present are sometimes the best means of support. Children want to know that someone cares enough to care about them. Try recording stories of a favourite Christmas.

## CREATE A MEMORY BOX

Children want to know that they can trust you to be available. The adult remaining in their life must be reliable. Help children to know they can depend on you; be there! Create a memory box including photo ID such as a passport and a driver's licence.

## SCRAPBOOK

Children need an adult to be available to hear their cry for attention. Your child may test the limits or act out. A child may be displaying what an adult sees as unruly behaviour, but it is often a child's means of seeking attention. Draw pictures or cut photos with bubbles to share feelings.



## DESIGN A QUILT

Following a loss, children may question their identity. Remind the child that he or she is still loved, and help him or her to identify his or her role and place in the family. They still need consistency with the same rules and routines. They need to know what to expect and who they can depend on. They need normalcy, just as we do as adults. Simply spend time together. Try designing a quilt with photos or a patch quilt with old, favourite articles of clothing.

## EDIT MOVIES TOGETHER

Humour can give us a release and a feeling of hope. The Christmas season stirs up all kinds of emotions: sometimes sadness, anxiety, and vulnerability and other times strength, hope, and joy. Allow family to freely express their emotions.