

## Building Memories at Christmas

### *After the Death of Your Loved One*

1. Buy a small, live tree to place in the yard after Christmas. The tree will be there for years to come and may be decorated with lights each year.
2. Candles help bring warmth into a home at Christmastime. The light is a symbol of Jesus' birth. Luminaries in the yard bring a sense of peace, particularly on Christmas Eve. Children can help prepare and set them out.
3. It helps at Christmastime to find something simple to place in your home to remember your loved one. Perhaps a small vase with a single rose or an electric candle placed in your window. Often a poinsettia plant or a Christmas cactus provide memories if you replant them later.

Children need to have something to help provide them with a memory of that special person they lost. Whether it is the loss of a sibling, parent, grandparent, friend, etc., allow the children to help pick out something so the whole family will remember their loved one. Buying a special ornament for the tree is a memory builder for upcoming Christmases. The children may even wish to make an ornament for the tree. You can be sure that whatever is done to remember the loved one will be treasured and remembered for many years.

4. Be sure to keep some of your family traditions, especially if you have children at home. They need to have warm, familiar feelings at Christmas. Pick two or three traditions that will not overwork you. If a friend or relative can help put up the tree and decorate, this is helpful. If possible, have a friend or relative take the children to a Christmas pageant, a concert, a night out looking at Christmas lights or a good Christmas movie. If you feel comfortable, then take them yourself.
5. If you decide to hang stockings as you usually do, include the missing family member's stocking. Perhaps you or the children will want to put a little gift or note in the stocking.
6. With children, particularly young ones, try to schedule only activities that will help them celebrate the true meaning of Christmas. Because adults find it difficult to face the upcoming holiday, they will try to keep busy and thus schedule too much. This is the time when parents and children get very tired. Lots of rest is important at these times, particularly for the parent/s. It is important to make major decisions early in the day. At evening time, when everyone is fatigued, minor decisions can become major hassles.
7. A visit to the cemetery before Christmas is good, even for the children. If they have been involved in the death and grieving, then include them when you decorate the grave with flowers or a small tree. Take time to talk about the loved one while you are there.

Please take time to visit a GriefShare grief recovery support group. At GriefShare you will have the opportunity to connect with people who better understand the emotions, fears and stresses you are facing this holiday season. You will also learn how to move forward on your grief journey in a way that is healthy.

by Judy Hawk

To find a GriefShare group near you, visit [www.griefshare.org](http://www.griefshare.org) or call 800-395-5755.