



## **Simplify – Tips to Help Grievers Reduce Holiday Stress**

**By Judy Brizendine**

The holidays are a crazy time of year, and the madness seems to start earlier as the years go by. We cannot even make it through Halloween these days before Christmas items start to appear widely in stores. I just want to scream, “Stop! It’s too soon!” And if you’re grieving a loss this holiday season, the days ahead probably seem even more stressful than usual. Keep reading to find some tips to help reduce your holiday stress.

### **Surrender Your Expectations**

We create (or at least add to) a great deal of stress by holding onto unrealistic expectations for ourselves, our loved ones, and our holiday plans. We’re often bound by tradition and guilt-ridden if we suddenly don’t feel up to participating in the way we normally do. We pressure ourselves to make everything perfect. Breathe a big sigh of relief and give yourself a pass this year! Stay true to the things that you genuinely want to do – and be okay with scaling back for your own well-being and peace of mind this year. Next year, you’re free to reevaluate and adjust. Stay open and flexible. And promise to treat yourself gently.

### **Pare Down and Simplify**

*Simple* can be just the recipe for a peaceful, pleasant holiday season. Sometimes the things we hold onto tightly are not the things that truly make a difference. Get down to basics! What matters most is people – and the precious time you share with folks you love. Overzealous decorating, cooking, shopping, and running yourself ragged are not the things that matter most. Pare down your to-do list. For this year, only keep the most important, treasured items on your list. Forget the rest. And don’t feel guilty about it!

### **Seize Moments of Quiet and Solitude**

Take little ‘time-outs’ when you begin to feel overwhelmed. Step away for a few minutes, get quiet, fix something warm to drink, and breathe deeply. Clear your mind and refocus. Take a moment to get your mind off the chaos around and within you. Listen to peaceful music, read a comforting passage, picture a tranquil scene in your mind, look at a favorite photo that makes you smile – whatever settles you down. And then get back to whatever you were doing.



**Helpful Tips:**

- Simplify (wherever, whenever, and however possible)
- Decide on a couple of traditions or activities that are most meaningful to you – and let go of the rest
- Surrender your expectations
- Refuse to feel guilty
- Strive for peacefulness and tranquility
- Accept that this year is different—but realize you can still experience moments of joy if you choose to do so
- Take little ‘time-outs’
- Know that you are not alone

Times of loss are painful and difficult periods, and sometimes they overshadow the rest of your life. Yet remember that good and joyous times still exist together with the sad ones. Respect and acknowledge your feelings, whatever they are, but look for moments of joy in the midst of your grief.

Wishing you a blessed holiday season ...

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