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## **For Immediate Release**

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# **Ten Tips to Help Grieving Families Survive the Holidays After the Death of a Child**

Oak Brook, IL--Simply surviving the holidays can be a difficult task when a family is struggling after the death of a child. While others are enjoying the usually festive atmosphere, bereaved families are faced with the specter of an empty chair at the holiday dinner, and the dilemma of whether to hang their missing child's stocking.

"The normal stress of the holidays is compounded tremendously when your child has died," says Patricia Loder, executive director of The Compassionate Friends, a national self-help support organization for families that have experienced the death of a child. "It is difficult for those who have not gone through the death of a child to understand the depth of despair which such a loss brings."

Mrs. Loder, who had two young children die in a car accident in 1991, says that she has learned there are many points a grieving family may want to consider during this holiday season.

1. Emotions need relief and should not be stuffed inside just so others will not be uncomfortable. Give yourself permission to cry, be sad, laugh, or have fun.
2. Do not overextend yourself by trying to host a party, or even attend a party or gathering, just because you have done so in the past. Others will understand this is not a good time for you.
3. Find new holiday traditions that can incorporate the child who died.
4. If you must shop for others, find a time when the stores are not extremely busy like early morning, order through the Internet, or ask others to shop for you.
5. It is therapeutic to discuss and share memories of the child who died.
6. Write down what areas you fear most about the holiday and discuss these with your family so you can be prepared.
7. Remember that holidays are very important for surviving children. They need the sense of normalcy the holiday season provides and should be included in holiday planning.
8. Consider a short, private memorial service or candle lighting in memory of your child.
9. Eat well, exercise, get plenty of sleep, and be careful of consuming alcohol, which is a depressant.
10. Remember that the fearful anticipation of an approaching holiday is usually worse than the day itself.

“Many people believe they can escape the holidays by leaving home on a vacation,” adds Mrs. Loder. “This rarely helps because grief can never be left behind and it is important to have the support of relatives and friends. Talking with others who have also lost a child can help those facing grief to understand they are not alone and that others have survived the holidays and they will, too.”

The Compassionate Friends has chapters in all 50 United States plus Puerto Rico and Washington DC and nearly 600 total chapters in the country, offering friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved families. The organization has a presence in an estimated 29 countries around the world. For information on a local chapter or for other means of support, call The Compassionate Friends toll-free at 877-969-0010 or visit The Compassionate Friends National website at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org).

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