



Tips for managing Christmas

When someone in the family has died, it can be very difficult to think about Christmas in the same way as before. Parents tell us that they really want to forget about Christmas, but feel they owe it to children to still try and make something of the day. Anticipation of the day can often feel worse than the day itself.

The tips here are ideas from families who tell us what they find difficult and how they have managed. But what matters most is that you do what you feel is right for you.

What was difficult?:

- I wanted to cancel Christmas but didn't want to let the children down.
- I couldn't face going into shops with happy music and people looking forward to a day I was dreading.
- I was so unsure about whether I should and try and do everything as we always had, or make everything very different.
- We had lots of invitations from friends and family to be part of their Christmas but I knew how hard it would be for us and didn't want to spoil it for them.

What did you find helpful? Tips for other families:

- I decided it was OK to put my own family first and not try to live up to other people's expectations.
- I talked with the children about what they wanted to do at Christmas. We did want to remember dad but we also wanted to enjoy the day as best we could.
- We decided to make Christmas Eve a time when we thought about mum - we went to her grave, lit candles and had a meal with just the three of us. Then we felt it was OK to spend Christmas Day with the family and enjoy ourselves. Sort of...
- I bought all the Christmas presents online! I felt guilty because I normally spent such a lot of time going to buy special gifts, but this let me out of going into shops with loads of happy people.
- We made a decoration with a candle and holly and the candle burnt throughout Christmas Day in memory of mum. We put a photo of her there too. During the day, most people in our family spent a little time on their own in front of the candle and I know this meant we all remembered her and made a place for her. This will be what we always do in the future for Christmas.
- We couldn't face doing the same as we always did - there were too many reminders. We wanted to be on our own and not be surrounded by happy families at Christmas. We booked a short break in a very quiet place and spent Christmas day walking on a very cold windy beach. Our Christmas dinner was sausage and mash!