

# Holiday Grief Needs Special Understanding

(NAPSA)—The holidays are normally a time of celebration, but for someone experiencing the recent loss of a loved one, this time can be overwhelming. Sometimes anticipation of a holiday can be more difficult than the arrival of the day itself. For help managing your grief or the grief of loved ones during this season, VITAS Innovative Hospice Care®, the nation's leading provider of hospice services, offers this advice:

1. Plan ahead. Be realistic about how you can enjoy the holidays with friends and family. Ask them for help.

Don't be afraid to retire some cherished traditions and begin new ones. Let the children decorate. Open presents the night before. Burn a candle in honor of your absent loved one.

Draw comfort from doing something for others, such as giving a donation in memory of your loved one or inviting a dinner guest who would otherwise be alone.

2. Evaluate your coping plans. Don't isolate yourself from those who love and support you.

3. Share your plans and limits. Let your friends and family know about your holiday plans. Inform them of any intended changes and explain how they can help you.

4. Allow yourself to have fun. Give yourself permission to take pleasure in the holiday. Don't feel guilty about any enjoyment you experience.

This holiday season, make a special effort to assess your own needs if you've recently lost a loved one. It's also important to be sensitive to the unique traditions and rituals of grieving friends from other cultures. For more information on hospice care or coping with grief, call 1-800-93-VITAS.

**Know how to help friends.** The holiday season is an important time to honor your faith, while being sensitive to the faith and culture of friends suffering from loss. Regardless of your friend's faith or culture, don't be afraid to ask if you are unsure how best to help them. The grieving rituals among Jewish families, for example, will differ within Jewish homes depending on whether a family is Orthodox, Conservative or Reform, according to helpful guides such as *"The Jewish Hospice Manual."* Catholics, Muslims, and Buddhists will certainly have different grieving rituals as well. During the holidays or at any time during the year, a friend might have traditions and attitudes toward death that affect how he or she acts and feels. (T)