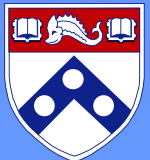


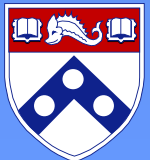
# COPING WITH LOSS DURING THE HOLIDAYS

JEFFREY BARG, MSS, LCSW  
SARAH ABRAMOVITZ, ATR-BC



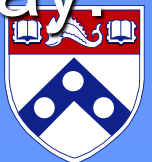
# Overview

- Holidays and other special occasions can be especially difficult for people who have experienced the death of a loved one.
- Understanding grief and mourning can be helpful in navigating the holidays.
- There are a number of specific strategies that can be helpful during the holidays.



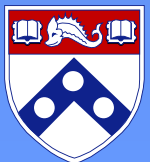
# Why are holidays so difficult?

- Holidays can accentuate the absence of a deceased loved one.
- Social expectations of these being happy times to celebrate together can conflict with what is possible for the bereft.
- How to 'celebrate' now given different ways family members are grieving and the desire not to deprive children of a 'normal' holiday.



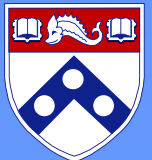
# Definitions

- ***Grief*** is the *experience* of a person who has had a significant loss.
- ***Bereavement*** is the *objective situation* of having lost someone significant through death.
- ***Mourning*** is the *process* of adapting to the death of a person.



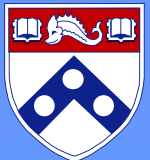
# Grief Basics

- ***Grief*** is a normal, healthy reaction to significant losses.
- ***Grief*** can manifest in many different ways in different people and there is no one 'right' way to grieve.
- ***Grief*** commonly has physical, emotional, social, cognitive, and spiritual manifestations.



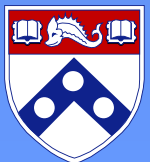
# Children Grieve Differently Than Adults

- A grieving child will look like just like any other child
- Can include intense feelings, but they tend to come and go quickly.
- Children often want to play and process the world and their grief through playing.
- Some common things seen in kids; reverting back to previous behaviors (thumb sucking, wetting bed), kids may become overly frustrated during regular daily activities, may become more clingy or want to be hugged a lot, may separate themselves from friends and family, may have trouble focusing in school, often become protective of family members.



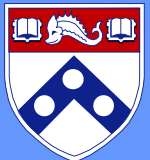
# Mourning Basics

- Most people are resilient and able to adjust to their loss over time.
- There are a wide variety of ways to cope with grief and adjust to the loss.
- Different coping strategies are helpful to different people.
- People will find ways to deal with their grief.



# Grief Styles (Doka & Martin)

<b>Intuitive Griever</b>	<b>Instrumental Griever</b>
Grief consists primarily of profoundly painful feelings	Grief is more of an intellectual process; painful feelings are tempered.
These feelings are expressed through crying and wanting to share their inner experiences with others.	Desire to master feelings along with a general reluctance to talk about feelings
Successful adaptive strategies facilitate the experience and expression of feelings	Directed activity & problem-solving activity





# How or Whether to Celebrate?

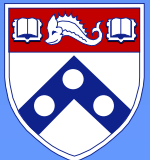


**Ignore the  
holiday**

**Celebrate in a  
totally different  
way**

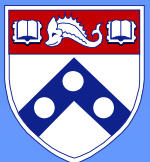
**Keep some  
traditions,  
change  
others**

**Keep  
everything  
the same**



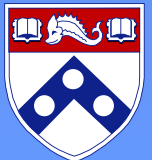
# Holiday Tips

- Have a plan B, and maybe a plan C
- Let family & friends know what you need and that you may have to cut out early
- You can always celebrate in a more customary way next year
- Consider building in tributes to your deceased loved one
- Your anticipation may be worse than the reality



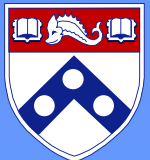
# Helping Children Get Through the Holidays

- Adults play an important role in helping children get through the holidays when new emotions and memories can hit with full force.
- Close family friends and other relatives can step in to assist the parent in helping the children grieve.



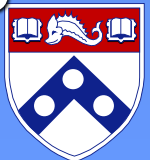
# Helping Children Get Through the Holidays

- Conversations and Connections: Talk with them about their loved one. Be specific with good memories and your loved one's favorite holiday activities. Keep the communication lines open by spending one-to-one time with a child who is grieving
- Play: Children need to take breaks from their grief, let them laugh and joke around.



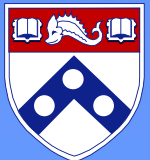
# Helping Children Get Through the Holidays

- Creativity: Let them dance, play music, do art to construct their world and process what they are feeling.
- Carry: Having a photo or small memento is helpful year round for a child, during the holidays have photos of past holidays of their loved one around and as something they can have with them wherever they go.



# Helping Children Get Through the Holidays

- Choice: Allow children to help make decision about day-to-day living and holiday plans. The children may feel they have more control of the situation when they can help make decisions. Change is okay.
- Composure: Don't feel like you always have to be composed. It is okay for the children to see your tears and feel your pain. Ask for a hug on your down days.



# Helping Children Get Through the Holidays

- Cook: let them bake a special holiday meal or dessert in memory of their loved one. Use this as a way to talk about their loved one.
- Celebrate: Let them go to holiday parties and family get-togethers if they desire. Make new memories and new traditions.

