

# LIFT

*Grief is a process, not a state. –Anne Grant*

November 2022

Bereavement Newsletter

Living Is For Today

West Texas Rehab's Hospice of San Angelo

**Navigating the Holidays Workshop**

Tuesday, November 1, 5:30 pm  
WTRC/HOSA Bates Bereavement Center  
1933 University Avenue

**Monthly Luncheon**

Tuesday, November 15, 11 am  
WTRC/HOSA IDT Room  
1933 University Avenue

**Candlelight Memorial Service**

Thursday, November 10, 6:00 pm  
Christian Fellowship Baptist Church  
211 W. 17<sup>th</sup> Street

**Light Up a Life Tree Lighting**

Thursday, Dec 1, 6:00 pm  
Cactus Hotel Lobby  
36 E. Twohig

*Please note : The Monthly Grief Education Group will not meet in November due to the Navigating the Holidays Workshop.*

*For more information about any of HOSA's bereavement offerings, including individual counseling, support groups, and/or memorial services, please call the Bereavement Department at 325-658-6524 or email Karen at [kschmeltekopf@wtrc.com](mailto:kschmeltekopf@wtrc.com).*

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## THROUGH THE SEASON

By Dr. Allison, Clinical Psychologist  
Accessed at [drallisonanswers.com](http://drallisonanswers.com)

The holidays are just around the corner. For some people, the holidays are wonderful and full of holiday cheer. But for others, the holidays can be incredibly difficult. While the rest of the world seems to be festive and cheerful, you're dreading what the season will bring. Maybe you feel sad or alone, overwhelmed or afraid. Or maybe you're feeling overcome with grief or loneliness. Maybe you feel jealous, as you see the season look merry for others. Or maybe you're planning to throw the covers over your head and ignore the next month or two if this time of the year feels hard for you. If you're dreading the holidays, you're in the right place because today I'm sharing seven practical ways to help you get through this holiday season.

1. **Acknowledge it.** Awareness is the first step. If you have a hard time at the holidays, start by acknowledging your emotions. When you dread the season, take a second to name how you're feeling. Don't just say you feel "bad" during the holidays. "Bad" isn't an emotion. Do you feel lonely, overwhelmed, or forgotten? Do you feel anxious, triggered, or isolated? Be specific with your emotions. Pinpoint what you're really feeling.
2. **Change your language.** How you talk about things has the profound ability to shape how you feel. The words you use when describing the holidays matter. If you say, "I hate the holidays" or "I always feel depressed this time of year," try reframing your language. Consider saying "The holidays tend to be difficult for me" or "I struggle more at the holidays." Or consider "This season is more challenging for me" or "I feel loneliest this time of year."
3. **Give up what doesn't serve you.** If there's something you absolutely hate about the holidays, something that makes you feel awful, allow yourself to opt out. Let it go, give it up, or say no thanks. Of course, you can't do this with the entire season, but if there's something in particular you really dislike, find a way to pass, not go, or make changes. If your family's five-hour meal that turns into an argument stresses you out, then leave early. If faking it at the holiday party of the friend you don't really like isn't good for your mental health, then don't go. And if overspending on gifts stresses you out, then don't do it this year. It's about looking at the things that truly cause distress and finding a way to do them differently. Don't power through. Don't keep doing what you've been doing, especially if

it's not working for you. If something makes you feel awful, skip it this year, and see how it feels.

4. **Resist the urge to isolate.** When we feel depressed, we tend to isolate. And the more we isolate, the more depressed we feel. The more depressed we are, the more we tend to isolate. You can see where this goes. So even though your brain will want to hole up and avoid the world this holiday season, challenge yourself to lean in. Be with people you care about. Engage when you want to avoid. In fact, if you're dreading the season, let people know you're dreading the holidays. Let them know you need some extra support. You don't have to be a social butterfly, and you don't have to be the life of the party. But resist the urge to isolate. The research is clear. Isolating is a quick ticket to feeling worse.
5. **Do something for someone else.** There's a lot of research on the benefits of prosocial behavior. Prosocial behavior is doing something kind or helpful for someone else. So if you're dreading the holidays, find a way to do something for someone else. Volunteer, buy a meal, run an errand, donate to a toy drive, or have a meaningful conversation with someone who seems lonely. It doesn't have to be big or expensive. It just needs to be intentional and kind.
6. **Schedule something you enjoy, smack dab in the middle of the holidays.** Notice the phrase *schedule something* versus *do something*. There's some good research that suggests *scheduling* a vacation leads to as much happiness as actually *going* on a vacation. That's kind of surprising. Looking forward to something helps guide your thoughts in a more positive direction. It provides a sense of purpose and hopefulness. And it can give you a target to focus on when the holidays feel hard. So schedule something that you enjoy, smack dab in the middle of the season. It doesn't need to be expensive, fancy, or complicated. Just make it something you enjoy. Put it on the calendar, make a commitment, and give yourself something to look forward to. This is powerful any time of the year, but especially when you dread the holidays.
7. **Know everyone else isn't merry.** Social media makes it look like everyone is joyful. Hallmark movies make it look like everyone is gathered with family. You may feel like you're the only one struggling. This isn't true. Everyone is not joyful. Everyone is not with family. And you are not the only one struggling. If it feels like everyone is happy, festive, and full of holiday cheer, please know this is not true. Everyone else is not happy, and you are not alone.

If you're dreading the holidays, acknowledge it. Name what you're feeling. And be thoughtful about what feels so hard this time of year. Then take a breath and remember you have the ability to impact your experience. You are not powerless over your experience. And you are not stuck feeling this way. You have the ability to do things differently this holiday season.

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San Angelo, Texas