

Coping with Holidays and Special Days

Finding Help with Grief, Year-Round



This guide contains information on:

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- **Grieving During Holidays and Special Days**
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This guide was created by/for clients, volunteers, and staff of South-East Ottawa Community Health Centre, as part of the Healthy End of Life Project (HELP) Ottawa. HELP Ottawa is a community-based initiative that aims to better support individuals who are frail, living with advanced illness, caregiving, and/or bereaved in the community.

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South-East Ottawa
Community
Health Centre
Centre de santé
communautaire
du sud-est d'Ottawa



"Blue Holidays"

Sometimes, all we need is a safe place to feel sad. Many local organizations host events that allow us to do just that.

See next pages for more information.

Grieving During Holidays and Special Days

(Champlain Hospice Palliative Care Program & Hospice Care Ottawa)

Emotional ups and downs may be particularly present at special times during the year, such as holidays, birthdays, or anniversaries. You may find that sad feelings seem to happen out of the blue. Or you may wonder why you aren't feeling what you think you should be feeling.

Grief has a timing of its own, sometimes appearing or disappearing when we least expect it. There is no right or wrong when it comes to mourning. Be patient with yourself. You may want and need some time alone. You may also want to connect with others virtually or over the phone, or even have a meal with someone.

While all members of your family may be grieving, your experiences of grief may be quite different. Try to let go of any expectations that you may have, and instead trust your individual grieving processes.

City of Ottawa: Who to Call

- Call 9-1-1 for life-threatening emergencies (fire, medical, or crime) in progress
- Call 3-1-1 for questions about city services and supports
- Call 2-1-1 for Community Navigation of Eastern Ontario (information and referral to resources)

Did You Know?

- Seniors ages 65+ ride for free on OC Transpo on Wednesdays and Sundays. You must set up the discount on your card first.
- www.octranspo.com
- 613-741-4390



How to Support Someone Who is Grieving




- Offer to help with chores like cleaning, baking, or cooking, which can be overwhelming.
- Invite them to attend a service with you and your family. Allow them to say 'no.'
- Find volunteer opportunities together. It feels good to help others.
- If they want to talk, listen. Active listening is the best thing you can do.
- Call, visit, or send a card to stay in touch; not just over the holidays but year-round.
- Remind them that you are thinking of their loved one who died.
- Be patient and respect their decisions, even if you disagree.
- Support the way they choose to handle the holidays or special days.
- Mention their loved one's name in conversation. Ask them to tell you stories and share your favourite memories of their loved one.

Practical Ideas for Navigating Holidays and Special Days While Grieving

- Honestly evaluate which traditions you can manage.
- Make plans ahead of time—plans that can be changed.
- Ask yourself: Who would I like to spend time with? How will I spend the day?
- Consider talking with your family members in advance, so you can prepare ahead.
- Ask for help when needed. Most people will be happy to give you a hand.
- Consider joining a bereavement support group.
- Celebrate a special day by doing something in memory of the person who died.
- Remember that tears and laughter are ok.
- Light a special candle, create a memorial space or scrapbook, have a memorial plant.
- Continue traditions that you enjoy and consider making new ones.
- Simplify gift giving.
- Give yourself something your loved one might have gifted you.
- Make a special decoration and give it a place of honour in your home.
- Explore special events, services, and supports which are available through your faith community





Individual Counselling and Support Services (no referral required)

Canadian Virtual Hospice

- www.virtualhospice.ca
- Website offers online information and resources for individuals who are living with a serious illness or who are at the end of life, their loved ones, and professionals. Resources include peer support forums, articles addressing a wide range of topics, and information on what to expect as end-of-life approaches.

Counselling Connect

- www.counsellingconnect.org
- Free single-session counselling supports, available online or by phone.
- English, French & Arabic

The Counselling Group

- www.thecounsellinggroup.com
- 613-722-2225
- Counselling supports, with option for sliding scale fee structure.
- English, French, Spanish & Arabic

Hope for Wellness Help Line

- www.hopeforwellness.ca
- 1-855-242-3310
- 24/7 mental health counselling and crisis intervention, available by phone or video, to Indigenous peoples across Canada.
- English, French, Cree, Ojibway & Inuktitut



Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization (OCISO)

- www.ociso.org
- 613-725-5671 ext. 322
- Short- and long-term in-person and virtual individual counselling, available by appointment. Support is open to all, with a specialization in supporting Ottawa's immigrant and refugee population.
- Available in multiple languages

Walk-In Counselling

- www.walkincounselling.com
- 613-755-2277
- Free in-person, phone, and video counselling sessions, at a variety of locations.
- English, French, Arabic, Spanish, Somali, Cantonese & Mandarin



Food Security



Bag Half Full

- <https://www.baghalffull.com/ottawa>
- 613-518-2272
- Non-profit group which offers grocery pick-up and delivery to vulnerable populations (no delivery or service fee).

Good Food on the Move

- <https://www.marketmobileottawa.com/>
- Non-profit which aims to offer accessible and affordable fresh foods and produce to Ottawa's communities.
- Includes Ottawa Good Food Box and Market Mobile programs.

Meals on Wheels

- <https://www.mealsonwheels-ottawa.org/>
- 613-233-2424
- Meal delivery program, offering hot meals daily and/or frozen meals in bulk.

Ottawa Food Bank

- <https://www.ottawafoodbank.ca/>
- 613-745-7001 (main warehouse)
- Monthly food hampers available to those in need. Use their website or call to find your local community food program.
- Delivery available if required.

For locations which serve free meals, please call 211



Community Support Services

- Call 211 or visit www.communityhomesupport.ca to find out about programs and services which aim to reduce isolation and support older adults and adults with disabilities to maintain their independence in the community.
- Available supports include transportation, housekeeping, telephone assurance, friendly visiting, and more.

24-hr Crisis Lines

Distress Centre

- <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>
- 24/7 Distress line: 613-238-3311 (English & French)
- 24/7 Crisis line: 613-722-6914 or 1-866-996-0991 (toll free) (English & French)
- TEXT: 343-306-5550 (10am-11pm, in English only)

TAO-Tel-Aide (Français)

- <https://telaideoutaouais.ca/>
- 24/7 Ligne d'écoute: 613-741-6433 ou sans frais 1-800-567-9699

Youth Services Bureau

- www.chat.ysb.ca (text)
- 24/7 Crisis line: 613-260-2360 or toll free 1-877-377-7775

Volunteer Opportunities



211 Ontario

- <https://211ontario.ca/>
- 2-1-1
- Call or visit their website. Use their search tool to explore volunteer opportunities, as well as other programs, in your area.

Volunteer Ottawa

- www.volunteerottawa.ca
- 613-736-5270