

A Holiday Inventory

This is a resource to help you and your family with the holiday planning. The end result should be a holiday that is meaningful for everybody. It is our hope that you will have a holiday season where duties are shared so that one person doesn't end up exhausted and resentful and where the spirit of love has the chance to break through and be shared.

You may use the form on the reverse side of this sheet in any way that would be helpful to you, but may we suggest the following:

1. Schedule a family meeting where you can all sit down and **together** fill out the form.
2. Involve **all** family members in the discussion of plans for the holiday. Children, especially younger ones, may have opinions of which we may not be aware.
3. Use the completed form as a guide to ranking holiday activities in order of importance to the greatest number of family members. For instance, perhaps the first five items on your list are things that must be done and the last five could get done if there is time.
4. Enlist the cooperation of all family members so that **everyone** will play a part in making the holidays happen.

Holiday Job List

Would the holidays be the holidays without it?	Is this something you want to do differently?	Is it done out of habit, tradition, choice, or obligation?	Is it a one-person job or can it be shared?	Who is responsible for seeing that it gets done?	Do you like doing it?
Giving to charity					
Giving presents to family members					
Baking and exchanging cookies					
Decorating the outside of your home					
Exchanging gifts with friends					
Making lists of what needs to be done					
Going to office or school parties					
Making homemade holiday gifts					
Sending holiday cards					
Buying something special to wear					
Doing your holiday shopping					
Seeing people you don't otherwise see					
Helping children make some gifts					
Making sure the house is clean					
Decorating the rooms in your house					
Providing quiet time for family					
Buying gifts for co-workers or teachers					
Attending special childrens' activities					
Preparing special traditional foods					

Thoughts on Holiday Coping...

- Consider changing the focus of your holiday celebration-the time you open packages or when the holiday meal is served.
- Don't be afraid to express your feelings-tears are an honest expression of love and emotion. Allow people to comfort you without pulling away or being embarrassed. They need to feel they are helping in some way.
- Consider a "winter holiday"-go to a mountain lodge, go sledding, or just take a walk in the woods. Take time out to enjoy what nature has to offer in this season. Let your thoughts (and your tears) flow freely.
- Go to a special holiday celebration at a place of worship where you can enjoy the music and celebration-but sit where you can "escape" inconspicuously if you can't handle it.
- Include the deceased in your conversations-since others realize that you are comfortable talking about your loved one, they can relate stories that will add to your pleasant memories.
- Buy flowers for your church organization in memory of your loved one, for many people to enjoy.
- Start a new tradition-as simple as discarding an old recipe and trying a new one; or volunteer at the airport to pour coffee for stranded travelers.
- Invite friends into your home to share a holiday happening-trim the tree, bake cookies, make decorations or wrap packages for hospitalized children or nursing home patients.
- Before you make a decision not to go to a family celebration because you don't want to make others feel uncomfortable, write down the pros and cons of why you should or shouldn't go and then carefully analyze your results.
- Plan to be with the people *YOU* enjoy.
- Buy tickets to an event that appeals to you and make one of the tickets a gift to a friend whose company you would enjoy.
- If you attend a party or open house, remember there are others there who are also doing something about their loneliness. Look for a person who seems to be alone and be willing to extend yourself. Listen attentively, share sparingly.

A Holiday Message: "Special Handling, Please"

Mary J. Pinkava

I was handed a package the other day.
It was wrapped securely to be mailed away.
Attached to the outside as plain as could be
Was a simple note for all to see:

*Please rush through the holiday season;
Too painful to open for any reason!
Contained within, find one bereaved heart—
Fragile, broken, falling apart.*

*Tried to go shopping the other day;
The hype of the season blew me away.
Sat down to write cards, that was insane.
Couldn't find the list or think of my name.*

*People say, "Come over."
"Be of good cheer."
"Celebrate the Holidays."
"Prepare a New Year."*

*But my grief overwhelms me
Like waves in the sea.
Can they cope with my crying;
An unsettled me?*

*I just don't have any holiday cheer,
Decorations, traditions, a big family meal,
I can't do it this year.
Do you know how I feel?*

*Guilty and frustrated!
I've let everyone down!
Our holiday celebrations
Used to be the best in town!*

*So, just ship me away
Address unknown.
When my grief is over,
I might fly home.*

Signed: Bereaved Heart

I just couldn't send Bereaved Heart away,
So I jotted a note and left it that day.

Dear Bereaved Heart:

*The death of your loved one
Has forced you to start
A new type of living
That's hard on the heart.*

*Undecorating your life
Of its angers and fears
Is not easy to do
Without shedding some tears.*

*And untying your guilt
Can release a bundle of strife.
Questions are stirred up
About living and life.*

*Don't be concerned now
With invitations, big meals.
See how the little stuff
Handles and feels.*

*Let the love of your family,
Neighbors, or friends
Uphold and sustain you
When you're at loose ends.*

*Most are eager to be there,
Willing to share.
Tell them your needs,
And they'll show you they care.*

*They'll take you shopping,
Write cards, even cook.
Let that stuff go now,
Get yourself off the hook.*

*You need time for healing,
You've much work to do.
Your heart needs mending—
Give that gift to YOU.*

*Take a walk, read a book,
Try something your style.
Make sure it's relaxing,
Makes you pause, rest awhile.*

*When Holiday invitations
Knock at your door.
Don't say "Yes" to five
When you only want four.*

*If you wish to remember
Your loved one who died,
Plant a tree, give a gift,
Let your heart be your guide.*

*This season of wonder
Can bring you relief
If you're willing to unwrap
Your tears and your grief.*

*Please listen, Bereaved Heart,
Stay close and please dare
To open your package
And let others care.*

*Signed,
Your Friend,
C.U.Soon*