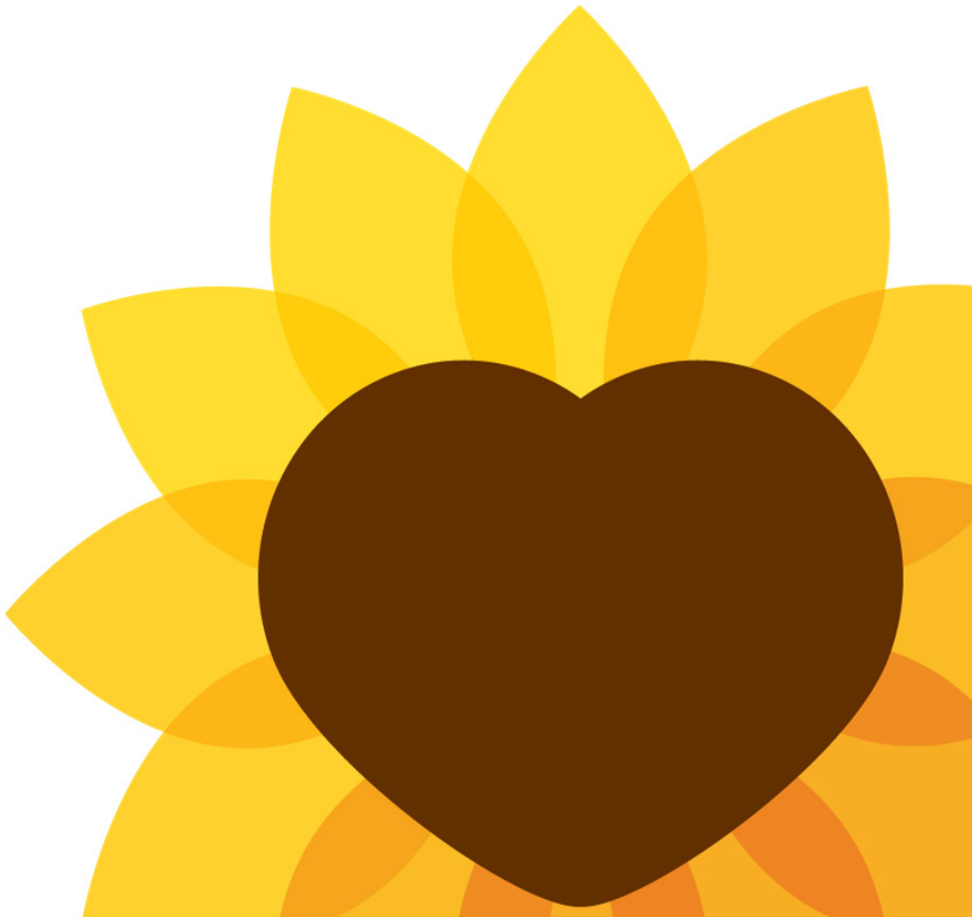




**East Cheshire  
Hospice**

Where people come to live

# Bereavement at Christmas



## Coping with the Christmas season when you are bereaved

Dealing with grief is challenging at any time of the year, but for many, Christmas presents a particularly difficult period. This leaflet aims to provide support during the festive season for those coping with bereavement.

Navigating the Christmas season while mourning can be overwhelming. The sounds of carols and the sight of others celebrating may intensify feelings of loss. Various media platforms may also evoke sentiments, serving as poignant reminders of sadness and the absence of a loved one.

Social invitations can be triggers for thoughts about how you are coping. Especially when facing events alone. Or the absence of once-received invitations can be hurtful. The cocktail of memories from past Christmases and societal expectations to appear okay can make the Christmas period after a loss an experience one might prefer to forget.

Whether mourning a loved one or friend, concerns about navigating the first Christmas season (or subsequent ones) are normal. Some may even entertain the idea of bypassing December altogether, waking up to a new year. These emotions and fears are part of a healthy spectrum of responses to profound loss, compounded by societal expectations that often hinder open discussions about grief. How can one cope with the significant void during Christmas?

**Christmas is just a day.** It's crucial to remember that there's no prescribed way to behave during this time to appease others. Acknowledging the season, even in a small way, might aid in transitioning to a new year. Keeping in mind that Christmas is just one day, amidst commercial pressures and build-up, is vital to prevent it from dominating everything.

**You are not alone.** Feeling isolated during the festivities is common, but it's essential to recognize that not everyone is celebrating, and many individuals dread Christmas for various reasons. It's a challenge, but focusing on the future and not dwelling on the past can pave the way for a more hopeful new year.

**Feeling emotional is natural.** Feeling emotions, whether sadness or joy, is natural. Preparing for the emotional impact of activities like decorating, and finding alternative ways to remember and honour the departed, such as creating a special display, can be helpful.

**Receiving cards and season's greeting.** Handling cards and greetings may pose a challenge. Preparing responses to well-intentioned but unaware individuals and seeking assistance from friends or family for replies can be beneficial.

**Is it time to be jolly?** Grieving individuals often grapple with conflicting emotions about enjoying the holiday season. It's essential to recognize that it's equally okay to experience joy and not feel so good during Christmas.

## Some useful things to think about doing.

**Take things slowly and at your own pace.** Balancing self-care, accepting or declining invitations, and being gentle with oneself are crucial during this period. Creating special memories, volunteering, embracing new traditions, or maintaining old ones are ways to navigate the season.

**Being creative can help.** Being creative and engaging in activities one enjoys, whether reading, watching films, or taking a relaxing bath, can contribute to well-being.

**Re arranging furniture.** Adjusting the living environment, whether by keeping things the same for comfort or making changes to reduce reminders, is a personal choice.

**Eating well.** Taking care of physical health, including eating well and managing sugar, caffeine, and alcohol intake, is also important.

**Accepting any offers of help.** Accepting offers of help and finding supportive friends are key aspects of coping. Communication with children and understanding that grief is expressed differently by each individual are crucial in managing expectations. Finally, if guilt arises from finding moments of joy, asking, “What would they want me to do this Christmas?” can provide reassurance.

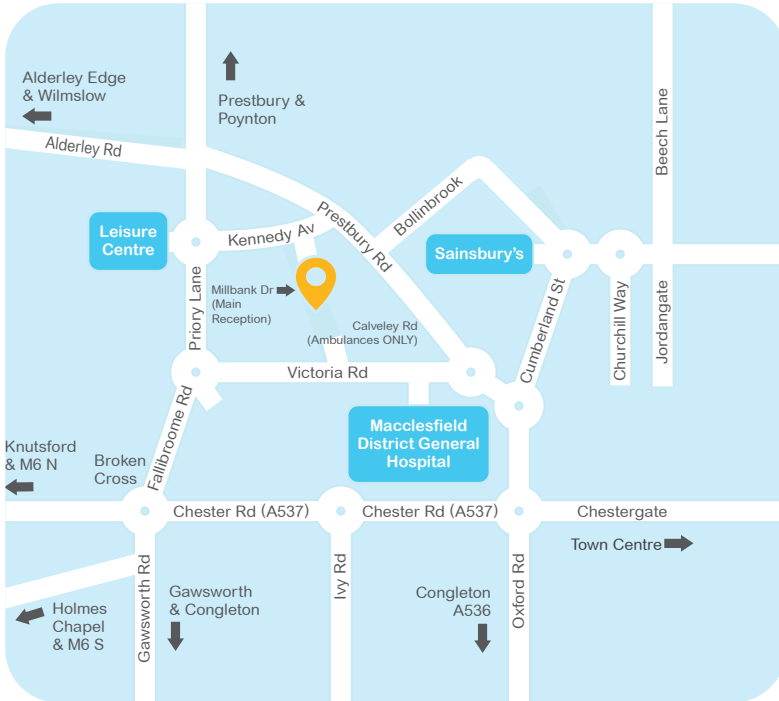
**Find a friend.** Seeking support from friends, family, or helplines is encouraged during this emotionally charged time of year.





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