

Rituals During the Holidays: Four Candles

Rituals can provide comfort during the holidays. They provide a structured way to include and remember loved ones who are no longer present. And, rituals give us something to do when we may be feeling helpless or out of control.

Below is a description of one ritual that many people have adopted to their own celebrations. Developing a new ritual takes planning, care and love but the thought and time you put into it can make difficult days a little less painful. Enjoy your creativity. You may wish to adopt this idea, tailoring it to reflect your situation. Or you may wish to create an entirely different ritual to more accurately reflect your life and the person who died. Rituals can help you include your loved ones in celebrations. They are a way to reassure yourself that although your loved one has died, they will continue to be part of you during all of the days of your life.

Candles are a traditional part of the holidays in many homes. You can purchase a candelabra or center piece, or simply arrange four candles on a table or fireplace mantel in your house. Alone, or with your family or friends, light each candle. If you are using the ritual by yourself, simply substitute “I” for “we” and read aloud as you light the candles. If you are with other people, each person can light one of the candles while they, or someone else, reads the following:

As we light these four candles in honor of you, we light one for our grief, one for our memories, one for our courage, and one for our love.

This candle represents our grief. The pain of losing you is intense. It reminds us of the depth of our love for you.

This light is in your memory: the times we laughed; the times we cried; the times we were angry with each other; the silly things you did; the caring and the joy you gave us.

This candle represents our courage to confront our sorrow, to comfort each other, to continue our lives without you.

This light is the light of love. At this special time, we cherish the special place in our hearts that will always be reserved for you. We thank you for the gifts your living brought to us. We love you.

