

Griever's Bill of Rights for the Holidays

By Genna Reeves, Ph.D.



Grief and the holidays can be challenging for so many reasons. As a griever, we hope that you find comfort that your feelings matter, regardless of what comes up during the “most wonderful time of the year”. Here are some “Griever’s Rights” we want you to remember during this season:

1- You have the right to feel whatever you feel.

- It’s okay to feel sad, angry, joyful, numb, or any combination of emotions. Your feelings are valid, and you don’t have to justify them to anyone.

2- You have the right to say no.

- You don’t have to attend every gathering or participate in every tradition. It’s okay to protect your energy and set boundaries that prioritize your well-being.

3- You have the right to change your mind.

- It’s okay to make plans and later decide you’re not up for them. Grief can be unpredictable, and flexibility is key.

4- You have the right to honor your loved one in your own way.

- Whether through a new tradition, a quiet moment of reflection, or sharing stories, how you choose to remember them is up to you.

5- You have the right to let go of traditions that feel too hard.

- Skipping or modifying traditions doesn’t mean you’ve forgotten your loved one. You’re allowed to do what feels manageable.

6- You have the right to create new traditions.

- Grief may inspire you to find new ways to celebrate or find meaning during the holidays. Embrace changes that feel right to you.

7- You have the right to be honest about your needs.

- Communicate openly with family and friends about what you can and cannot handle. It’s okay to ask for help or space.

8- You have the right to feel joy.

- Feeling moments of happiness or laughter doesn’t mean you’ve stopped grieving or that you love your loved one any less.

9- You have the right to remember your loved ones.

- Whether through sharing stories, displaying their photos, creating a special tribute, or simply holding their memory in your heart, you are entitled to honor their presence in your life in ways that feel meaningful to you.

10- You have the right to take care of yourself.

- Whether that means stepping away from a gathering, taking a nap, or finding moments of quiet reflection, self-care is not selfish.

11- You have the right to grieve in your own way.

There is no “right” way to navigate grief during the holidays. Trust yourself to make the decisions that are best for you.