COPING WITH THE HOLIDAYS
AFTER INFANT OR PREGNANCY LOSS

Holidays can be a difficult time. Here are some suggestions for coping from other bereaved parents.

1. Be gentle with yourself and those closest to you.
   - Plan relaxation time, warm baths, watch movies, listen to music, read books you’ve always wanted to read.
   - Exercise, get plenty of sleep and fluids, eat well.
   - Write in a journal or talk with your partner, family or friends about your feelings on the holiday.

2. Honor your baby with each holiday/anniversary
   - Make or purchase a special ornament in your baby’s honor.
   - Give a holiday donation to a charitable organization in memory of your baby.
   - Name a star or light a candle in your baby’s memory.
   - Plant a tree, bush or perennial plant.
   - Share your mementos or photos with family, a special friend, or counselor.

3. Limit social gatherings
   - Choose the ones you feel give you comfort or meaning.
   - Choose not to attend some gatherings or to leave holiday functions early.

4. Christmas/Hanukah
   - Limit decorating to what you and your family feel are important.
   - Cards: send preprinted cards, add a memorial service card, photocopy a letter, or choose not to send cards this year.
   - Avoid shopping on weekends, shop online, ask family to help.
   - Give gift certificates or money, or have the store wrap gifts.
   - Open presents on a different day or at a different time.
   - Place a wreath or decoration at the gravesite or memorial site.
   - Have a stocking, ornament, poinsettia, or Christmas cactus in memory of the baby.

5. Mother’s Day and Father’s Day
   - Celebrate with your own parents or those closest to you.
   - Purchase a mother’s ring or other birthstone jewelry.
6. Change holiday traditions for this year
   - Sharing the day:  - Spend the day alone, or with your immediate family only.
                      - Share the day with another grieving family.
                      - Volunteer with a local shelter or nursing home.
   - Baking:          - Buy "holiday treats".
                      - Limit the quantity of baking.
                      - Have family members participate in baking or decorating.
   - Holiday meals:   - Go out to a restaurant.
                      - Consider potluck to share in preparing food.
                      - Ask someone else to host the meal.
                      - Eat at a different time.
                      - Have a different menu, create a different setting.
   - Church services: - If you attend a church regularly, choose a service at a different
day or time or choose not to go this holiday.
                      - Try attending a new church.
                      - Many communities offer a Blue Christmas Service in December
                        for those who are grieving.
                      - St. Mary's Grief Support Services offers A Tree of Lights
                        Ceremony early each December – in memory of loved ones who
                        have died. Call 218-786-4402 for more information.

7. Consider the needs of grieving children
   - Try not to overschedule and be rushed.
   - Maintain sleep and mealtime routines as much as possible.
   - Allow time for extra cuddling/attention.
   - Invite them to participate in rituals such as releasing balloons or lighting ice candles.