



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: Molly Day
Director of Marketing & Development
(517) 482-1315
mday@elesplace.org

HOLIDAY TIPS FOR GRIEVING CHILDREN

The holidays can be an especially difficult time for children coping with the death or life-threatening illness of a family member. Ele's Place, a healing center for grieving children, suggests several ways to help these children through the holidays.

During the illness:

- Talk with the children about how the illness may affect family traditions this year and the loss they may feel as a result. Include the children in discussions about holiday plans.
- Help the children identify holiday activities they can still do with the ill person. Listen to holiday music, watch holiday movies, and read holiday books together.
- Find ways to create special memories in spite of the illness. Making tree decorations like a paper chain is something a child might be able to do with a bedridden family member.
- If you are unable to leave the ill person, ask friends or neighbors to take the children to holiday plays or shopping. People usually want to know how they can help.
- Consider enrolling the children in the TLC support groups at Ele's Place, for children coping with a family member's life-threatening illness. Even if the ill person expects to recover, Ele's Place provides a comforting, supportive place where children can help each other cope.

After a death:

- Share photos and holiday memories of the person who died. Children want to know you miss them, too.
- Make an ornament to hang on the tree that reminds the child of the person who died.
- Decorate a candle and light it at meal time in memory of the loved one.
- Help the child decorate a wreath with pictures and items that were loved by the person who died and place the wreath at the grave.
- Help the child make a donation to a charity in memory of the person who died.
- Listen to the loved one's favorite holiday music.
- Hang a picture of the loved one on the tree.
- Help the child with a blessing at mealtime that mentions the person who died.
- Encourage the child to draw pictures and create gifts inspired by their memories of the loved one to give to other family members.
- Consider enrolling the children in bereavement support groups at Ele's Place.

“It’s important to help children acknowledge loss during the holidays,” says Laurie Baumer, President & CEO. “Children often need ‘permission’ to talk about the person who died. Let them know you would rather keep the memory of your loved one alive than pretend nothing has changed.”

Ele’s Place provides creative, age-appropriate support groups year-round for children and teens, 3-18 years old, throughout the Ann Arbor and Greater Lansing areas. The Lansing location also provides the Together Learning to Cope (TLC) program for families dealing with a life-threatening illness. All services are provided at no cost.

For information, visit www.elesplace.org or call (517) 482-1315.

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