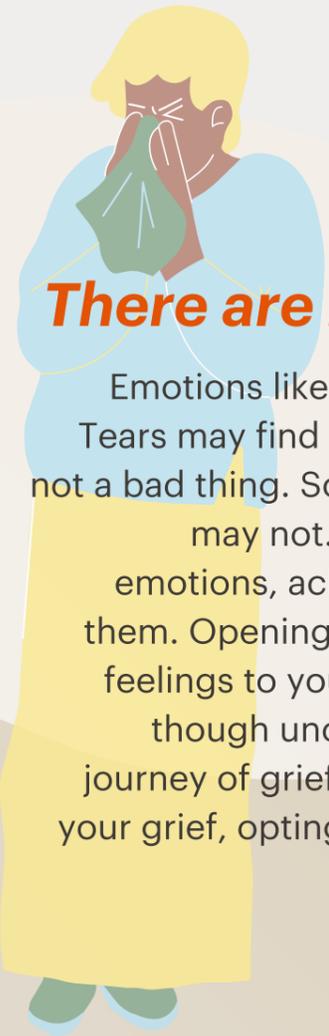


CELEBRATING SPECIAL OCCASIONS WITHOUT YOUR LOVED ONE

It may be particularly difficult if it's your first time without them, whether it's your first Chinese New Year without your grandparent, first Valentine's without your partner, or your first Mother's day without your mom.



There are no bad emotions

Emotions like sadness are not a bad thing. Tears may find you more frequently and it is not a bad thing. Some may cry more and some may not. Take time to recognise your emotions, acknowledge them and sit with them. Opening up about your thoughts and feelings to your trusted friends and family, though uncomfortable, will help in your journey of grief. If you are concerned about your grief, opting for grief therapy may be an option to consider.



Decide on what you can handle comfortably

For some, festivities like Chinese New Year may face restrictions from their religious practices. For others, such occasions may bring about questions from well meaning family members and friends - "How are you coping?" Should you feel comfortable going ahead with such gatherings, prepping yourself in advance for such questions may be helpful. Another alternative would be to have a close friend by your side during such gatherings where they can act as a moderator should the questions cause too much discomfort. Making changes to the way you usually celebrate special occasions may also be a helpful alternative. Don't be afraid to vocalise your needs as you grieve.



Remember your loved one

Recognising your loved one's presence in your family may come in the form of starting new traditions (e.g. sharing your favourite memories of them, raising a toast to them, lighting a candle in their memory, playing their favourite songs) or simply setting aside a specific time in the day to remember them allows them to still be a part of the occasion.

Take care of yourself

Celebrations and social gatherings may be physically and emotionally draining. As you grieve and remember your loved ones, self care may not be at the top of your head. Remembering to look after your physical, emotional and even mental wellbeing may require more effort. Know your limits and having time to do what you normally enjoy may be helpful in your journey of healing during grief. Spending some time in nature or exercising are activities that can aid sleep.



Permit your family and yourself to celebrate

It is okay to have fun. Don't be afraid to laugh and enjoy the festivities - joy and laughter are not contemptuous. Acknowledge how well you have been coping with your grief and remember, mourning comes in different forms for every individual. Use these special occasions to celebrate the lives of your loved ones, grief will fade over time but cherished moments last forever.

