

# Honouring anniversaries and other special occasions

The anniversary of your loved one's death, along with other special occasions such as Christmas and birthdays can be a difficult time as memories of the event can be strong and the loss of your loved one may be heightened. Often, a period of time leading up to these significant dates can prove to be emotionally taxing as you wonder about how you might cope. It is normal to become a little anxious during these periods. Planning ahead may help to alleviate your strong emotions and choose how to honour your loved one and your memories. Some people prefer not to mark the occasion – there is no right or wrong – only you will know what is best for you.

If you do wish to express your feelings and acknowledge your loved one, you may like to use one of the ideas provided below. Some people will want to fully feel the sadness and emotion of the day as they reflect on their loved one. Whereas others will want to spend time focused on the deceased – from a few minutes, to hours to the whole day. Whatever you do, we recommend that you think ahead, anticipate what might be hard and make a plan.

## Your plan should reflect the person you are and what has real meaning to you

- Take flowers to the grave site, memorial site, or other place you go to remember your loved one.
- Look at old photos and home videos – this can be alone, or with family and friends.
- Turn digital photos into a photo album on your phone, computer or other media platform.
- Donate a few of your loved one's belongings, or make a charitable donation in their name.
- Volunteer with a charity or cause close to your loved one's heart.
- Plan a memorial service or candle light vigil.
- Reach out to someone else grieving the loss via letter, card, phone call, or email.
- Host a dinner party and invite those who knew your loved one best.
- Cook your loved one's favourite dish, use one of their recipes to prepare a meal, or host a pot luck and ask people to bring a dish your loved one liked.
- Light a candle in honour of your loved one.
- Visit or spend time in a place where you feel close to your loved one.
- Take the trip you had been planning or dreaming about.
- Read old notes, letters, or emails from your loved one.
- Treat yourself to a massage.
- Distract yourself by getting together with friends, going to the movies, or taking a short trip.
- Watch your loved one's favourite movie.
- Make a mix CD of music that reminds you of your loved one.
- Create a new ritual to celebrate the life of your loved one – something that can be repeated.
- Do something your loved one would have enjoyed.
- Build a memorial with portraits, personal items, and objects that remind you of your loved one.
- Spend time journaling about your loved one.
- Make a toast or say a prayer or blessing in their honour.
- Plant a tree in your loved one's name.
- Celebrate the strengths you have developed because of your loved one's death.
- Make a keepsake box of things that remind you of your loved one.
- Finish a project your loved one was working on.
- Continue to work towards a cause your loved one was involved with.