

## **SPECIAL DAYS AND EVENTS**

*Adapted from After Sudden Infant Death-by US Dept of Health & Human Services, HRSA MCH*

The first year after your baby's death is very hard, and your baby's first birthday and the anniversary of his or her death may also be very difficult. Even if you seem better, the sadness and pain may return. It will be hard to be around other children, especially babies. These are normal feelings. It is OK to celebrate and enjoy these times. It is OK to laugh and cry at the same time. You can go from laughing to crying very quickly. Other children in your family will need help during the holidays to celebrate as they have in the past or to understand why things are different.

### **Some parents...**

- Choose to celebrate and participate in these occasions as they always have in the past, but find it is a struggle. Sometimes they even avoid talking about the baby who died.
- Choose to do completely different things during the holidays and special events. They may not participate in any of the usual activities or traditions.
- Try to balance their participation in holiday activities and cope with the pain and sadness of missing their baby.
- These are difficult and personal choices.

### **Remember...**

- What you and your family decide to do for anniversaries, during the holidays, or for special events is your choice.
- Your participation in these events may be very different during the first year or so. After a while, you may go back to normal activities or permanently change how you remember some holidays and special occasions.
- Celebrating holidays and special events will reflect your cultural background and traditions. It is important for you to value these traditions because they are part of your life during happy and sad times.

## **TIPS FOR COPING WITH SPECIAL DAYS**

- ★ Lower your expectations of yourself.
- ★ Forget about what other people think you should do and feel. Give yourself permission to feel and do whatever you think is right.
- ★ It's okay to stay away from children for a while.
- ★ Pick and choose the family events you will attend.
- ★ Find comfort or inspiration in a holiday event or a new tradition.
- ★ Offer kindness and support to others who are having a hard time.
- ★ Set some goals.
- ★ Do something special for yourself.
- ★ Look to your religious beliefs for strength and support.
- ★ Plan ways to help you handle uncomfortable situations.
- ★ Plan a special event for just your baby's parents.
- ★ Share with your family and friends what helps and what hurts.
- ★ If you have other children, try to make it fun for them.
- ★ Special days/events can be emotionally and physically draining. Try to get enough rest.
- ★ Anticipation of any Holiday, birthday or anniversary is worse than the actual day itself.
- ★ Remember-these special days are only temporary.