

## **Coping During the Holiday Season**

If you are struggling with the holiday season after a pregnancy loss, you're not alone. Many people feel little holiday cheer after losing a baby, particularly if the loss was recent.

You might feel reluctant to attend gatherings, not wanting to face pregnant relatives or friends with new infants. In addition, you might feel like everywhere you look, you see a reminder that there should have been another face in the family photo or another stocking by the fireplace.

Some of these tips might make holiday gatherings easier to tolerate:

- **Know your limits**

If you are invited to a party where you know you will face more stress than enjoyment, maybe you should decline and send well wishes instead. Don't be afraid to bow out of social gatherings if you aren't feeling well. On the flip side, however, consider whether being around friends might help you take your mind off things for a little while.

- **Find an "out"**

If you do need to attend a gathering, locate a quiet place where you can step away if you need some minutes to yourself. Alternately, plan an excuse in advance for why you need to leave the party early in case you feel overwhelmed, then go with the flow and see how you feel when you get there. Sometimes it's helpful to have a "code" word or phrase that will alert your companion to your desire to leave!

- **Share your feelings with family**

People can support you best if they know what you need. Remember that people who have never experienced a pregnancy loss may not have any idea what you are going through, and they may be more supportive if you let them know how you feel and what you need from them.

- **...But choose your battles**

Everyone has one of "those" relatives that just won't get it no matter what. If you have an ignorant in-law or second cousin throwing thoughtless comments at you, for example, decide whether you want to educate that person or just smile and nod. Remember that even though certain comments can be infuriating and hurtful, the person saying them probably isn't purposefully trying to be insensitive and will most likely change the subject after a minute or two.

- **Seek comfort where you can**

Find someone to talk to. If you are spiritual, attend extra services in your faith or say a special holiday prayer for your baby.

- **Don't feel bad if you enjoy yourself**

Remember that just as it's OK to *not* be in the holiday spirit, it is also OK to smile and to have fun. It doesn't mean that you didn't love your baby or that you are not a good mom. Don't feel guilty for taking your mind off things and living your life.