



Contacting your Grieving Friend at Christmas

Doris Zagdanski BA Dip Ed

The Christmas Season can be a difficult time when you're grieving. How to prepare for the lead up and how to spend Christmas Day can be a dilemma – so many people to please and so many things have probably changed since last year.

Friends too will want to be helpful and sensitive – but they may not know how to make an approach. Here are some tips:

- **Write a personal message in your Christmas card.** Even though we live in a world of social media these days, there's something special about receiving a hand written card – especially one that mentions your loved one's name and what they meant.



*I know this Christmas won't be the same as last year without John.
We will be thinking of him and missing him too.*

- **Make a phone call.** Sometimes we can be reluctant to contact a friend – we think they'll be busy or the time won't be right or we might upset them if we mention the name of their loved one. The truth is, your call might be one of the few that they receive – you might be surprised to know that once the funeral is over, most people only hear regularly from a handful of their friends.

Your call could start like this:

"Hello Sue, I'm calling to see how you're doing with Christmas just around the corner ..."

- **Bake some shortbread, Christmas cake or other treats and drop them around** – when you're grieving it's easy to lose your motivation and energy to do the usual day to day things like cooking. Something home made by you can be very welcome.
- **Be understanding if your friend does not accept an invitation to Christmas drinks** – socialising when you're grieving can be hard enough without the memories of Christmas past and seeing other couples or families enjoying themselves together. Your friend might just not feel up to small talk and conversation about holidays, gift giving and all the talk about families getting together.
- **Try to make time to visit at home.** Whilst a text message is quick and easy, and email and Facebook are our common forms of communication these days, a visit from someone who allows you to talk about your loved one and how you feel about being without them at Christmas time might be a very special conversation to share. Some tears or sadness are to be expected, so you don't have to try to cheer your friend up ... just being there and listening to them can be a precious gift of friendship.

Doris Zagdanski is the Convenor of MyGriefAssist website. She is a leading figure in modern day grief and loss education. Her seminars are included in vocational qualifications in Allied Health, Counselling and Funeral Directing. She has written several books in this genre and they are available at www.allaboutgrief.com