Going On Holiday After Loss: A Guide for Bereaved Parents

Losing a child is one of the most difficult things any parent can experience. As you navigate through your grief, the thought of taking a holiday might feel overwhelming or even impossible. It's completely normal to feel conflicted about going on holiday. This guide offers advice to help you with the decision of going on holiday after loss.

Understanding Your Feelings

Going on holiday after losing a child can bring up a complex mix of emotions, such as:

- Feeling guilty for taking time away, as if you're not honouring your child's memory by seeking peace or enjoyment.
- Sadness that your child will not be with you to create new memories.
- Excitement for your holiday and the fun times ahead
- Worry about being away from your child's grave, ashes or memorial, and the fear that you might feel disconnected from them.

These feelings are all valid, and it's important to acknowledge them as part of your grieving process. Every parent copes with loss differently, and there's no right or wrong way to feel.

Why Should I Consider Going On Holiday?

- **Change of Scenery:** A different environment can provide a break from daily triggers, giving your mind a chance to rest and a new perspective.
- **Time for Reflection:** Being away from home and your usual routine can offer the time needed for reflection.
- **Self-Care:** A holiday can provide opportunities for relaxation and self-care, which are important for looking after your mental health.

Tips For Planning Your Holiday

If you decide to go on holiday, there are a number of ways you can tailor the trip to your needs. It's important to make sure the experience is as comfortable as possible.

- **Choose a Supportive Environment:** Consider destinations where you feel safe and supported. This might mean visiting a familiar place or staying with close friends or family.
- **Plan Your Activities:** It's okay to plan your holiday around your needs. Choose activities that you find relaxing and within your comfort zone, and avoid anything that might feel overwhelming or triggering.
- **Memorial Activities:** If you're worried about being away from your child's grave or memorial, you could do small acts to honour them while you're away. This could be lighting a candle, bringing a photo with you, or setting aside time each day to think about them. If you would normally visit your child's grave or memorial, you could ask a friend or family member to visit on your behalf and send you a photo.

- **Consider Taking Your Child's Ashes:** Some people choose to take their children's ashes on holiday with them. If you are flying on a plane, you will need to take your child's death certificate with you and ensure their ashes are in a secure, sealable container that fits in your hand luggage and can be x-rayed by security. You will need to let your airline know in advance if you intend to take their ashes.
- **Communicate Your Needs:** If you're travelling with other people, it's important to communicate your needs and boundaries. Let them know if you need some alone time, or if there are certain topics you'd rather avoid discussing.
- **Be Gentle with Yourself:** Remember that having mixed emotions is okay. Allow yourself to enjoy your holiday without feeling guilty, and to grieve when you need to.

Coping With Challenges

While on holiday, you might still face challenging moments, unexpected triggers and feelings of sadness and grief. Keeping in touch with supportive friends or family members who understand your grief can help you navigate these emotions. Remind yourself that it's okay to feel these emotions and that they are a natural part of your grieving process.

Returning Home

Coming back home after a holiday can bring a new wave of emotions, and it can sometimes be difficult to get back into your normal routine. It can be helpful to:

- **Reflect on Your Experience:** Take some time to reflect on your holiday and the positive parts of your time away. Allow these memories to coexist with your grief.
- **Reconnect with Your Routine:** Ease back into your daily routine at your own pace. Be patient, and give yourself time to readjust.

Remember that your holiday was just one step in your ongoing journey of grief. Continue to seek out the support and self-care you need.

What has helped other parents?

We asked other bereaved parents about what they found helpful when going on holiday after loss:

"We planned Helena's first trip to the seaside for later in the year for something to look forward to while she was in hospital. Sadly Helena passed away before we got the chance to take her. Even though it hurts to go now she's not with us, we need to keep going as a family and we'll still be taking our boys, along with her ashes. Her photo will be up so she can be part of it too and we will look for special stones on the beach to add to her fairy garden at home." - Samantha, Helena's Mum

"We always ask a family member to visit Francis' grave and send us photos, so that we can see his grave is clean, tidy and well maintained whilst we are away. We will often bring a little toy or ornament back to place at his grave when we come home." - Olly, Francis' Dad

Final Thoughts

Taking a holiday after the loss of a child is a very personal decision. Whether you choose to travel abroad or stay close to home, or whether to go for one night or two weeks, it's important to consider your own needs, comfort levels and emotions and to do what is right for you. Be kind to yourself, and remember that seeking moments of happiness and enjoying yourself is ok.

Other resources

The Tiny Tickers Facebook support group for bereaved heart parents is a supportive and understanding community of those who understand the loss of a child. We welcome you to join **here.**

Our website contains information and advice on navigating loss **here.**

As part of our Family Experience video series, parents discuss their experiences of dealing with bereavement. Watch the video **here**.

Many bereaved parents find comfort in creating an online tribute page after losing a child. This space, like an online memory box, can be filled with memories (photos, music and videos) and shared with family and friends. You can also light candles, write messages and give gifts. It is possible to use this page to fundraise in memory of your child, but this is by no means obligatory. You can create your free tribute page **here**.