

# Tools *for those facing grief* on *Father's Day*

Although it was not a national holiday until 1972, Father's Day was first celebrated in 1908 by Grace Clayton as a memorial for more than 360 men who were killed in a mine explosion near Fairmont, West Virginia. These men left behind more than 1,000 children. Two years later, Sonora Smart Dodd began a yearly celebration of fathers in Spokane, Washington to honor her father, William Smart, who raised Sonora and her five siblings following the death of his wife. These moments in history show that Father's Day can hold different meanings for everyone and can provoke a variety of emotions.

Often memorial holidays are created out of a sense of honor for someone or something that has been lost. For many, Father's Day is no different. For those grieving a death or a broken relationship, this holiday can feel isolating and can be a painful reminder of loss.

We encourage you to take a moment to reflect on the personal meaning of Father's Day while planning ahead for this holiday. With these suggestions, you may be able to channel your grief into a meaningful opportunity for growth and remembrance.

## *Preparing for Father's Day*

- Acknowledge how Father's Day makes you feel. Realize that it is okay to want to celebrate Father's Day and equally okay to not want to celebrate.
- Remember that the lead up to the holiday can often be the hardest part. On the days prior to Father's Day, make extra time in your schedule to do things that you enjoy such as a hike, a meal with a friend or a video chat with family members or friends.
- Make a plan for Father's Day. Whether the plan is to do nothing or to do an activity that reminds you of your father, such as the meaningful activities listed in the column on the right, having a plan can help reduce your stress level on Father's Day.
- Consider taking a social media break on Father's Day. If you plan to participate in social media, plan what you would like to share in advance.

## *Meaningful Father's Day Activities*

- Tell someone about your father.
- Wear something that belonged to your father.
- Write a poem or letter for your father.
- Write down lessons he taught you or compliments he gave you.
- Plant a tree or flowers in remembrance of your father.
- Create something with your father's belongings.
- Spend time with people who loved your father as much as you do.
- Spend time with others whose fathers have died.
- Light a candle in remembrance of your father.
- Volunteer your time or surprise someone with an act of kindness.

## *Additional Resources*

- Preparation tips adapted from: <https://www.dougy.org/news-events/program-articles/fathers-day-and-grief/1752/>
- <https://waltercarter.com.au/blog/getting-through-grief-on-fathers-day>
- <https://www.everydayhealth.com/columns/my-health-story/getting-through-fathers-day-without-your-dad/>
- [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/how-to-celebrate-fathers-day-when-your-father-has\\_b\\_5761bca4e4b02081542fb071](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/how-to-celebrate-fathers-day-when-your-father-has_b_5761bca4e4b02081542fb071)

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