

MAKING SUMMER FUN AGAIN

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<http://www.hellogrief.org/making-summer-fun-again/>



Summer is supposed to be a time for sleeping in, day-dreaming, and playing outside for hours on end. But the long days can also be a difficult reminder that a loved one is no longer around to share in the fun. Since you and your kids may already be feeling the loss more acutely now, why not take this opportunity to talk about it, and to find new ways to make summer a fun family time?

Here are a few suggestions for discussions and activities that may help you as you work towards finding a new normal for your family's summer time:

Take turns describing your dream vacation with your loved one. It can be one that you took, or one that you wish you could take. After each person shares their idea, talk about how to make it a reality. If it's something simple and within your budget, like a family picnic at a local park, make plans to make it happen. If the dream vacation isn't something within your means, find a creative way to act it out. For example, if your 6 year old says wishes he could have gone ice fishing in Alaska with his father, you can build an igloo out of ice cubes in the bathtub. Add a small amount of water, drop in some goldfish crackers, grab a kitchen strainer or measuring cup, and go fish. It's ok to be silly!

- Look through old family photos, and find some favorites from summer months if you have them. Tell stories about what was happening in each photo, especially if the photo was taken before the kids were born or old enough to remember. Help them to create new memories through the stories you have to share. You can also have fun by encouraging your kids to make up fun stories about what they think is happening in the photos.
- Go to your local travel agent, and get a few brochures for

local attractions that are within your budget, but that you have not been to before. This can include amusement parks, hiking trails, shopping malls, or local oddities (think "largest ball of string on the West Coast!") Spread the brochures out on your floor, and let your child or children pick which one they would like to do. When you go, make it a point to talk about things your loved one would have enjoyed about the trip. Help your child to see that your loved one can still be included in these new activities, and that it's ok to have fun without them there.

- If your family is taking a vacation to a place that you used to go with your loved one, talk about how you would like to celebrate your loved one's memory while you are there. Do you vacation at a cabin in the woods? Take a nature walk and have each family member pick out things that remind them of their loved one. Is your favorite vacation spot at a lake or beach? You can work together to write your loved one's name in the sand and decorating it with rocks or shells. If you vacation in a particular city or town, you can all enjoy a meal at your loved one's favorite pizza place. You may even want to try to do something different each day – it's totally up to you and your children.

Remember, there's no right or wrong way to handle summer and vacations after the death of a loved one. You may choose to do the usual family vacation, or you may want to steer towards something entirely new. What's most important is that your children feel supported and loved as they find new ways to have fun and enjoy family time. You can help them see that having fun doesn't mean they don't miss their loved one, and that it's actually a great way to celebrate their memory. You may be surprised at the wonderful new traditions you build with your children.

