

GRIEF & BIRTHDAYS



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CAMP FOR KIDS

Each family follows a unique calendar of birthdays each year, celebrating everyone's birthdays throughout the year. For some families, most of their birthdays fall over the first half of the year or the second half; for others, they span the entire year, or they may all fall over 1–2 months within the year.

Just as the timing of birthdays is unique, so too can be the different birthday traditions that a family forms, from how they do presents, cake, cards, balloons, or favourite meals. It could be how they sing "Happy Birthday" or if they eat out somewhere special, and whether presents are opened before breakfast or just before bed. Birthdays are days of celebration and gladness around having that person as part of the family, that they have grown another year older.

When a death occurs, it can make the birthday of your Important Person another time of the year that is challenging and even conflicting to journey through. Their birthday, which was about celebrating their life, can seem very confronting as it now highlights their absence. Should their birthday still be celebrated? Especially when it's a day so full of memories of previous birthdays or planned and hoped-for birthdays ahead.

Some families can find their Important Person's birthday to be a really tough day, and therefore it's a day that is quietly walked through. The death anniversary may be a day that holds more focus for them as a family. Or it could be the opposite: the death anniversary is a day that is less focused on, but their birthday is the day that is full of talking about their Important Person, remembering them, honouring them, and celebrating who they were by doing things that their Important Person loved to do.

As a family, you may make their favourite meal, go out to their favourite restaurant, have a cake, listen to their favourite music, watch their favourite movie, or look through the photo albums. The kids may also still want to buy something special for their Important Person, even if it is placed into a memory box or displayed in the house. You may still decide to sing "Happy Birthday" or spend some time going around as a family and sharing what you wish you could let your Important Person know about what has happened since their last birthday.

For other families, it may be a mix of a low-key day, but still having a moment to connect and remember them. It may be lighting a candle, stepping outside into the garden, or watching the sunset. It might be more private and less vocal in the remembering and in the grief of missing them. It may be holding how old they would have been close to your heart throughout the day and the ache that they are not here to share the day with you and the rest of the family. To know if they were, just how much love they would have had poured all over them. It just doesn't seem right to have another year tip over without them here to welcome it in.

Grief, love, aching, loss, celebration, gratitude, weariness, missing, holding on, valuing, irreplaceable, unique—our lives have forever been changed by our Important People