

Self-Care Tips -- Surviving the Holidays

Visiting Biological Family Who Are Unsupportive

After you've come out to your family, that first visit back (or second or third or fourth...) can be traumatic, if they are unsupportive of your identity. Whether you're planning to take hormones, or not, whether you've already made life changes, or not, your relationship with them will be different simply because you've told them something that changes their conceptualization of you forever. They may be in denial, not talking about it, but they are now aware there is something to be in denial *about*. The following tips can help when you visit unsupportive family members:

- Take phone numbers and e-mail addresses of friends with you -- and use them.
- Tell friends where you're going, and make arrangements to call them.
- Take time-outs.
- Bring along a favorite book or CD.
- Bring along pictures of friends and family of choice, to remind you that you are loved for who you are.
- Try to stay present in the moment, to keep from feeling like a child again.
- Keep your family of choice in your heart while you're gone.

Spending Major Holidays Alone

While it may seem like a negative thing to spend a major holiday alone (especially if you've always spent holidays with biological family), there are some positive elements to this situation, if your family isn't supportive of your identity. Here are some ways to make the holiday more pleasant and fun:

- Contact friends to see if anyone else will also be alone; maybe you don't have to be.
- Make the time into an opportunity to see favorite movies, eat your favorite foods, read a book you've been looking forward to -- treat the time like a vacation.
- Consider your relatives individually and decide whether you might want to call one or two you feel close to.

Grief During the Holidays

If someone close to you has died in the past year (or two or three or four, there is no "right" length of time for this kind of process), give yourself permission to be more sad at this time than you might otherwise be. In American culture in particular, the winter holidays especially evoke more feelings of family, connection and belonging than other times of year. It may help to be in touch with others who (a) were also close to the person who died, and/or (b) have experienced a loss similar to yours. Even if you don't talk about the grief specifically, it may help you to feel connected again.

If you are going through transition, it may help to reach out to other trans people that you've been talking to about your transition -- grief and loss are common components of transition, and such feelings are often more prominent for trans folks during the holiday times of year.

