A FREE HOLIDAY GUIDE FROM PUT ON YOUR BIG GIRL PANTS

What to Say (and What *Not* to Say) When Someone Is Grieving at the Holidays



The lights go up, the music starts, and for someone who's grieving, everything gets louder. Here's how to actually help this season — from someone who's lived it.

If someone you love is facing the holidays without their person, this season can feel like a spotlight on the empty chair. You want to help. You don't want to make it worse.

My first holiday season after my husband Clint died, people came into our home and put up our tree. They got out our Christmas decorations. Families offered to wrap presents for my kids so I wasn't left doing it myself. I don't remember much of what anyone *said* that December. I remember exactly what people *did*.

I also remember the sentence that knocked the wind out of me: *"How long are you going to be sad for?"* I didn't have any words. So let me give you some better ones.

— Kamille

Kamille Bauer • Host, *Put On Your Big Girl Pants* • Keynote speaker on grief, loss & hope

PART 1 — SKIP THESE

Things that land wrong this time of year

1. "How long are you going to be sad for?"

Someone asked me this, and I had no answer. People get uncomfortable that we're not happy — but we can't be, because we're grieving. There is no deadline.

2. "Cheer up — it's Christmas!"

Joy can't be ordered up because of the date on the calendar. Let them feel what they feel, even in December.

3. "You should come — it'll take your mind off it."

Their mind isn't going anywhere else. An invitation is a gift; pressure isn't. Invite, and make "no" an easy answer.

4. "At least you still have the kids."

Anything that starts with *at least* asks them to feel grateful in the middle of the hardest season of their life.

5. "He'd want you to be happy."

Maybe. But it can sound like their grief is disappointing the person they lost.

6. Avoiding their person's name all season.

Not mentioning them doesn't make the empty chair smaller. It just makes it lonelier.

7. "Let me know if you need anything this holiday."

They won't call. December is already too much to manage. (What to do instead is on the next page.)

The one rule under all of these

You can't make their holiday merry, and you don't have to. Your job is to make sure they're not carrying it alone.

PART 2 — SAY THIS INSTEAD

Words that actually help this season

"Want to keep any traditions this year, or skip them all? Either is okay."
Give them permission to change everything — or nothing.

Say their person's name.
"I was thinking about Clint while we were decorating." At a table with an empty chair, the name is a gift.

"You don't have to be okay this Christmas."
Let them off the hook from performing joy.

"I'm coming Saturday to help with the tree."
Specific. Already decided. Nothing for them to plan.

Check in after the holidays, too.
January is long and quiet. A text on New Year's Day, or the week after Christmas, means more than you know.

> The holidays are full of people — and somehow lonelier than ever. Be the person who shows up in December, and still shows up in January.

PART 3 — BETTER THAN WORDS

Don't ask. Just do the holiday thing.

Nobody asked me what I needed that first Christmas. They just came — put up the tree, got out the decorations, and wrapped presents for my kids. That's what I remember.

So don't ask "what do you need?" — pick something and do it:
Put up the tree. Haul out the decorations. Wrap the kids' presents. Drop off a plate of holiday dinner. Shop their list. Hang an ornament with their person's name on it. Text on Christmas Eve, Christmas morning and New Year's Eve — and say the name.

PART 4 — COPY, PASTE, SEND

Holiday texts you can send today

Not sure how to start? Pick one, swap in their person's name, and hit send. Short and specific beats perfect.

> Thinking of you and [name] this holiday season. No need to reply.

> Can I come help put up your tree Saturday? I'll bring the hot chocolate.

> I'd love to wrap the kids' presents for you this year. Drop them off anytime — no pressure.

> I'm bringing a plate of holiday dinner Thursday. I'll leave it on the porch.

> Merry Christmas. I'm remembering [name] with you today.

> I know New Year's Eve is a hard one. I'm here — call or text anytime.

Want this message for your team, church or event?

Kamille shares her keynote *From Tears to Treasure* with companies, hospitals, women's events and congregations — real stories, real tools, and hope for hard seasons.

Book a 20-minute call → calendly.com/kamillebauer/intro

If this helped, there's more where it came from.

I talk about all of this — grief, faith, and how to put your big girl pants on and show up when life is hard — every other week on the podcast.

Listen: search **Put On Your Big Girl Pants** wherever you listen, or on YouTube. • kamillebauer.com • youtube.com/@KamilleBauer

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