



## Handling The Holidays When You're Feeling Blue

By Martha M. Tousley, CNS-BC, FT

"Happy Holidays!" is a greeting we hear often at this time of year - but if you're grieving the loss of your pet, the holiday season may be anything but happy for you.

Holidays can create feelings of dread and anxiety in those who are bereaved. The clichéd images of family togetherness and the often unrealistic expectations of a season filled with picture-perfect, joyful gatherings can cause tremendous stress for those who are not grieving - let alone for those in the midst of the painful, isolating experience of loss.

How does one celebrate the holidays when a loved one is so sorely missed? Creating new rituals and new traditions that may pay tribute to the memory of the deceased is one way to survive, and perhaps even embrace, the holidays when a loved one has died.

### Here are some suggestions of what you can do:

- \* Decorate a wreath with pictures, toys and items that belonged to the animal who died and display the wreath in your home, or place it at the animal's grave site.
- \* Wrap a framed picture of the lost animal, and give it as a gift to another grieving family member.
- \* Create a special ornament labeled with the name of the deceased animal and hang it on the tree.

- \* Decorate a candle and light it at meal time in memory of your loved animal. If you celebrate Hanukkah, recall a memory of your pet on each of the eight nights that you light the Menorah.
- \* Make a book of pictures about your pet to give or simply to share with one another. This is a good activity for children as well.
- \* Make a donation to a favorite charity in the pet's honor.
- \* Encourage grieving children to draw pictures and create gifts inspired by their memories of the pet to give to other family members.
- \* Decorate and hang a cut-out star in your home with your hopes and dreams for the future. Thinking about tomorrow is part of your healing.

If it's too hard to be in the same place where you spent holidays together with your pet, opt for a change of scene and go somewhere new. If you can't afford a vacation, go to a restaurant - or a friend or family member's home that doesn't have painful associations with previous holidays. Although you can't erase thoughts and memories of your lost pet, it may help to create a new holiday experience.

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## Pet Friendly Holiday Treat Recipes Pumpkin Barley with Turkey

Ingredients:

- 1 quart chicken broth
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 1/4 cup long-grain rice
- 3/4 cup pearl barley
- Pinch of freshly grated or ground nutmeg
- 1/3 pound ground turkey or ground turkey breast
- 1 cup canned pumpkin puree
- Salt

In a small pot, warm the chicken broth over low heat. In a large skillet, melt the butter over medium heat, then add the rice and barley and toast for 3 to 4 minutes, stirring occasionally. Season the grains with the nutmeg and stir in half of the warm broth. Cook until the broth bubbles, about 5 minutes. Then add the turkey, crumbling it as you drop it into the skillet, and cook until the liquid is absorbed by the grains, about 5 minutes. Stir in the remaining broth, 1/2 cup at a time, allowing the broth to be fully absorbed before adding more. Cook until the barley is tender, about 18 minutes. Stir in the pumpkin puree. Cook over medium heat until just heated through, about 1 minute. Season to taste with salt. Makes 4 Servings, Prep 10 min, Cook 35 min

Courtesy - Everyday with Rachael Ray



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