

Can You Love the Holidays When You Love a Prodigal?

Holidays—especially Christmas—are often painful for anyone who loves a prodigal.

Dena and Tom Yohe certainly experienced that. Their years on a prodigal journey covered many holidays. Tension and conflict often prevailed.

If the prodigal is home, emotional eruptions can happen. If they are not there, the pain, disappointment, even fear can fill your heart. On many days and holidays, Tom and Dena didn't know where their daughter was.

In her book, *You Are Not Alone*, Dena writes of the fears they had to confront. Their daughter could:

- Be kidnapped, sold into sex trafficking;
- Disappear and never be heard from again;
- Suffer irreversible brain damage from substance abuse;
- Die from an overdose;
- And many other possibilities.

Thankfully their daughter met some wonderful friends who helped her out of her wilderness and into recovery—an effort that launched the nonprofit To Write Love on Her Arms. It was a long journey—for her and for her parents.

On that long journey, Dena and Tom learned so much and began to share it with others. From that developed a ministry—Hope for Hurting Parents () and Dena's book, mentioned above.

Because of their experiences over many years—and many Christmases—they have much practical wisdom for anyone living

in a prodigal wilderness. Here are five simple suggestions to help keep the holidays peaceful:

1. Lower expectations.
2. Consider doing things differently.
3. Avoid social media.
4. Focus on others.
5. Be grateful.

Dena and I had a wonderful conversation about loving the holidays when you love a prodigal. You can discover more of the story and help if you love a prodigal on my *When You Love a Prodigal* podcast episode, *Can You Love the Holidays When You Love a Prodigal?* {eoa}

Judy Douglass is a global writer, speaker and encourager. Her most recent book, *When You Love a Prodigal*, has ignited her podcast of the same name. She directs Women's Resources at Cru.

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