

## [Hope for the Thanksgiving Holiday](#)

The holidays can be an especially difficult time of year for those who are grieving. When everyone around you seems happy and full of holiday cheer, you may want to just skip the holidays all together. The sights, sounds and smells of the holiday season can be overwhelming and the period of time leading up to the holidays can actually be worse than the day itself.

Before Thanksgiving Day, think about what might be tough and plan ahead, for example the “empty chair,” should you keep it in place or remove it from the table all together? Should the oldest child or another family member sit there now? Should you set a place in honor of your loved one? There’s no right or wrong answer, do what’s best for you and your family.

Be realistic... Don’t over schedule, you know yourself better than anyone. Set realistic goals and always have more than one plan. By having multiple plans – plan A, B and C – you can quickly move to the next plan if the previous one isn’t working or becomes too difficult.



It’s important to remember that you don’t have to do things the way you’ve always done them. It may be a good time to start some new traditions, this doesn’t mean you’re going to lose the old traditions; you can always go back to them or incorporate them again when you’re ready. Just because you’ve always put on a huge feast doesn’t mean you have to this year, have everyone bring a dish, have another family member host Thanksgiving dinner, or go out to a restaurant this year.

Address the “elephant in the room,” by acknowledging your loved one and including him or her in your gathering by lighting a candle, making a toast in his or her honor, or sharing favorite memories and funny stories about them. It may be difficult to start these conversations but it will benefit everyone around you and help each of you heal a little bit at a time.

A wonderful new tradition is to cover the table with a plain table cloth, provide permanent markers for family members and guests to write what they’re “thankful” for on the table cloth, a favorite memory or message to your loved one, and children can have fun by drawing pictures. Bring the tablecloth out at each holiday until it’s full and then start a new one!

Remember to give “thanks” for what you had and what you still have... memories, love and feelings in our hearts can never be taken from us unless we let them. This year give thanks that the grief you feel is based on the enormous love you’ve shared!