



TIPS FOR COPING WITH GRIEF ON

THANKSGIVING

Thanksgiving is often pictured as a time of gratitude, warmth, and family gatherings. But for many who are grieving, this holiday can feel less like a celebration and more like a reminder of who's missing.

The empty chair at the table, the traditions that no longer feel the same, or the pressure to feel "thankful" when your heart is heavy – these can make Thanksgiving an especially difficult milestone.

Here are some tips that may help, but do what feels right for you and your situation.

Why Thanksgiving Can Be Hard When You're Grieving

- *Family gatherings highlight absence. Being surrounded by others can intensify the ache of missing someone you love.*
- *Cultural pressure to be grateful. The focus on gratitude during this holiday can feel at odds with the reality of grief.*
- *Traditions may feel broken. A favourite recipe, a familiar laugh, or a long-standing ritual may now be painful reminders of loss.*



Honouring Your Loved One

Thanksgiving doesn't have to erase the person you've lost. To honour your loved one, you might:

- *Invite everyone to share a favourite memory of them at the table.*
- *Write a note of gratitude to your loved one, even if they're no longer here.*
- *Set aside a quiet moment for reflection before or after the meal.*
- *Continue one of their favourite holiday traditions in their honour.*

Gentle Ways to Care for Yourself

- ***Have a plan.*** *Preparing in advance can reduce stress and uncertainty. Consider making a loose plan based on what feels most meaningful and supportive, while remaining flexible enough to honour how you feel in the moment.*
 - ***Give yourself permission to feel.*** *It's okay if this year doesn't look or feel like "normal." You don't need to force gratitude or joy.*
 - ***Set boundaries.*** *If large gatherings feel overwhelming, consider attending for only part of the day – or not at all.*
 - ***Create a new tradition.*** *Light a candle, share a memory, or cook your loved one's favourite dish in their honour.*
 - ***Lean on support.*** *Whether it's friends, family, a support group, or a therapist, you don't have to carry grief alone.*
 - ***Practice self-kindness.*** *Take breaks, rest when you need to, and give yourself space to step away if emotions feel too heavy.*
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Grief doesn't take a holiday.

*If Thanksgiving feels difficult, you're not doing anything "wrong" – you're simply human, carrying love and loss together. Give yourself permission to honour both your grief and your resilience. **You are not alone.***

For those who are grieving the loss of a loved one on Thanksgiving,

You are not alone.

For more information, support, and grief resources, please visit www.thehospice.ca/resources/ or call (519) 974-7100.

REFERENCE: <https://thelossfoundation.org/grieving-through-thanksgiving-finding-your-way-in-a-season-of-togetherness/?v=5435c69ed3bc>