

# Getting Through Your First Thanksgiving without Your Loved One

As we enter the holiday season, the month of November can be emotional for those grieving the death of a loved one. A month filled with celebrations and family get-togethers can lead to increased feelings of loss when someone we love is no longer with us. Unlike previous years, 2020 has been especially difficult due to COVID-19. For those grieving the loss of a loved one, lack of connection and loving touch from family and friends due to physical distancing can heighten feelings of sadness and isolation. Finding gratitude and thanks this Thanksgiving season can seem more challenging than ever. Below, we provide some tips and strategies to help navigate Thanksgiving without your loved one in the hope of alleviating some of the sadness you may feel.

## Take Time to Honor a Loved One

Honoring the life of a loved one can happen at any time throughout the year. During the Thanksgiving holiday, there are beautiful ways to incorporate moments of remembrance that can encourage healing.

- **Memory Boxes** – This activity is a great way to engage children in remembering loved ones. It is a simple activity requiring a shoebox, colored pencils, and any other decorative items. Allow your child to decorate the box in whichever way feels right for them. Within the box, children and family members can place objects that remind them of their loved one. This memory box can also be shared at the Thanksgiving table.
- **Storytelling** – Sharing stories with family and friends about a loved one is a way to preserve their memories and honor the life lived with them. We all carry specific memories of our loved ones, so you may be surprised to hear a memory or story that is new to you.
- **Preparing Favorite Food** – This is a way to remember loved ones whether you choose to spend the holiday alone or with family. Food can have a powerful connection to those who are no longer with us. In preparing your loved one's favorite dish, it can strengthen the bonds of your connection with them.
- **Finding Moments of Gratitude** – Taking moments to focus on gratitude can set the stage for healing. Grateful moments can be found throughout Thanksgiving Day whether in sharing stories or in taking time alone to reflect on the life you shared with your loved one. Keep in mind that finding moments of gratitude can also become a daily practice and it does not have to be reserved for Thanksgiving Day.



These are only a few ideas of how we can honor and remember our loved ones during Thanksgiving. What is most important is remembering and celebrating the life of your loved ones in whichever way feels right to you.

### **Be Open about the Support You Need**

As you consider your plans for Thanksgiving Day, be open and honest to family and friends about how you would like to be supported since support can look differently for each person. Some individuals seek out a specific person whom they can turn to when feeling overwhelmed. Others find comfort in identifying a safe, quiet space to process feelings. Healing from the loss of a loved one cannot be rushed; however, with support, managing the holiday season can be easier.

For additional resources, visit our website at [www.childbereavement.org](http://www.childbereavement.org). To register for our free virtual grief support groups, give us a call at (888) 988-5438 or e-mail [intake@childbereavement.org](mailto:intake@childbereavement.org).



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