

If Only Thankfulness Was as Easy as Pie

Posted November 12, 2017 by Melanie Delorme

<http://www.gpshope.org/thankfulness-easy-pie/>

As I celebrated Canadian Thanksgiving in October this year with my family, I thought about the past 9 Thanksgivings without Garrett.

Our 8-year-old son, Garrett, was accidentally shot and killed in a hunting accident in the summer of 2008.

In the months—and possibly years—following Garrett’s death, I found very little to be thankful for. In fact, everything in my life suddenly became difficult. I was going through the motions of living and paid little attention to my surroundings or other people.

I will never forget our first Thanksgiving without him. I felt helpless, hopeless and anything, but thankful. Thinking about how we would spend the weekend felt agonizing.



I knew that sitting around the house would be painful because I knew I would dwell on the fact that Garrett was missing. Instead, we did something practical. Before our big Thanksgiving supper, we spent the afternoon gathering rocks and arranging them into Garrett’s name on a hill overlooking our ranch.

It was during this afternoon that I realized that even though Garrett was not physically with us, our love for him allowed us to spend the day creating memories with each other in his honor—including him in our weekend.



As we ended our day with the traditional turkey feast, we asked the children to reflect about something they were each thankful for. The youngest said, “Pumpkin pie!” His naivety and carefree outlook made me a little envious.

But honestly, some days, pumpkin pie might be the only thing you can find to be thankful for. This is not only normal, but it’s also okay for you to feel this way.

It may seem incredibly difficult to be thankful when there is a huge void in your celebration, but I maintain that bereaved parents are some of the most thankful people there are. Once you have lost a child, it feels as though nothing in the world could be worse. You treasure past holidays with your child, and you truly take nothing for granted. Try including your child in your celebration this year by:

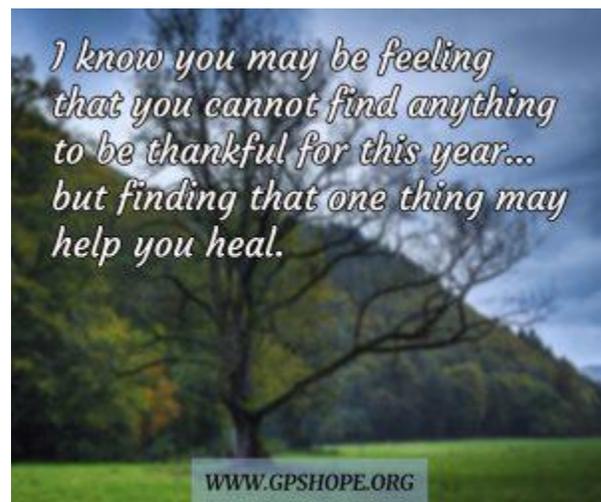
- Cooking your child's favorite food
- Taking a decoration to the cemetery
- Sharing a memory of your child that brings you joy
- Lighting a memory candle

Looking back to that first year, I realize that I had many things that deserved my gratitude:

- an employer who provided me with all the time off I needed—no questions asked
- co-workers who picked up my slack when I was mentally absent
- friends who delivered meals to our family for months after Garrett's death
- parents who walked the grief journey with me by giving of their time and energy when I could find very little
- siblings who found the courage to speak at Garrett's funeral and offer support throughout that first painful year
- strangers who sent messages of support and sympathy after hearing our story
- the community of other heart-broken parents who reached out to me

I know you may be feeling that you cannot find anything to be thankful for this year. Believe me—I understand how you feel. Also, believe me when I tell you that finding that one thing may help you heal.

In the midst of our grief, it is often difficult us to see our blessings. However, thankfulness and gratitude are choices. You can choose to become bitter and angry and broken, or you can choose to find one thing for which you are grateful—right now.



And tomorrow, maybe you'll find another. And the next day, another. Many people I know have started to keep gratitude journals. You will eventually be able to find gratitude every day, but you need to choose it—try to adopt a gratitude attitude.



As I am finishing this post, I am listening to my kids argue about whose turn it is to wash the dishes, and for this minute I am choosing to be thankful that they have each other in their lives.

But in the next minute, I am going to take a deep breath and seek out some leftover pumpkin pie! (And yell at my kids to be thankful that we have dishes to wash—just kidding.)

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Melanie Delorme was content as an English teacher, wife, mother, sister, and friend, then, without warning, she gained the title of bereaved parent when her eight-year-old son, Garrett, was accidentally killed in a hunting accident. Her passion has turned to bringing hope and healing to other parents, like herself, who have endured the tragedy of losing a child. Melanie Delorme is a blogger, and author of “After the Flowers Die: A Handbook of Heartache, Hope and Healing After Losing a Child,” released in 2017.