

Holiday Hall Pass

It's not easy to be a seriously ill family member, so print out my special Hall Pass and excuse yourself from the holiday activities.

November 29, 2024 By [Adam Hayden](#)

To Whom It May Concern,

We thank you for understanding that [_____] cannot participate in the full day of holiday activities this year. We apologize for missing the festivities, and we appreciate your prioritizing their health.

Of course, [____] would like to be with you in person, but there is something you should know about the holidays: They are taxing. We understand you are preparing the meal, setting the table, cleaning the house, and taking on hosting responsibilities. Will those two uncles get into it again? Will the kids fight at the table? Will Aunt Shirley remove her dentures at some point, and will Cousin Lauren remember her lactaid pills? Hopefully, the dog doesn't get into the trash! And the emotional weight of wanting everything to turn out just right is nothing to balk at! Thank you for going to these lengths to create an atmosphere of joy, gratitude, and celebration.

For [____], we also hold emotional weight. How often will we need to give a health update to a relative? Will we need to speak to our prognosis? Will we grin and bear it when Grandpa rails about excessive government spending when our existence relies on social services and medical research provided by the federal government? It's not easy to be a seriously ill family member.

More than the stress of rehearsing our diagnosis story over and over or fielding awkward platitudes about praying, never giving up, and being the miracle, the holidays also dial up our anticipatory grief. The things you miss before they are gone. We like the holidays, and we love our family, but to mask our distress through a crooked smile takes a lot of emotional heavy lifting. It's [____] who is the patient, remember? So not only do we regret not being there, but we also have to admit that it's a little relieving because sadness is a tender emotion, and we may need the space this year.

Besides, you have to admit, things do get a little wild around the living room with all the nieces and nephews running around! We love them and love you, and I don't know how to explain this if you haven't lived it, but all of that overstimulation can set off a cascade of fatigue and increased symptoms that make us very vulnerable. The last thing we want is a medical emergency during the holidays!

We really want to thank you for understanding. I hope we can plan a smaller gathering, or maybe you'll drop by with a plate of food this evening or the day after the guests leave. We love having visitors when we're up for it, so maybe text [_____] or their care partner, and we can find a time that works.

We love you so much, and we wish you a very fun-filled and joyous holiday! Thanks for understanding that we need to do things a little differently this year, and we value how you have loved us through this difficult illness.

With love,

[_____]

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