

COVID-19 Grief and Loss of a Loved One During Social Distancing



Traditionally, when a loved one passes, we pay tribute to their memory, share our grief, and mourn our loss by gathering at a funeral, Shiva, wake, memorial or through in-person visits. However, with the social restrictions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, a gathering of family and friends in one location may not be possible, making the grieving process exceptionally difficult.

In this challenging situation, whenever possible, it's important to use the internet and virtual solutions to connect with others to mourn your loss and manage the final wishes of your loved one. Here are some suggestions:



Reach out often to others through texts, phone calls and social media.

Keep conversations going with your family or close circle of friends daily. Having conversations through WhatsApp or through Facebook, for instance, creates a regular flow of communication throughout the day, reminding you that people are thinking about you.



Consider a virtual group gathering.

A friend or family member can help you arrange an online gathering via Google Hangouts or Zoom, for example, perhaps to hold a virtual "remembrance," sharing memories and stories.



Connect to an online bereavement support group.

Having a person who is also experiencing grief check in with you every day can be comforting.



Seek virtual options to honor your loved one's memory or final wishes.

Explore options to create online memorials suited to your remembrance needs to share with others. This may include a virtual memory book, for instance. Or, look into services that host digital funerals and how others can connect to them.



Find other ways to honor your loved one.

Many people find meaning in journaling, or assembling a small tabletop tribute, displaying mementos honoring the loved one.

Tips to help a grieving friend or family member

Be a good listener.

Ask them how they are doing, resisting the urge to offer cheery responses or otherwise diminish their feelings.

Consider options to offer condolences or help.

Send a card, email or text; complete an online remembrance; share photos online or via mail, or contribute to a fund to cover the costs of a funeral or to a charity in the family's or decedent's honor.

Offer short-term and ongoing assistance.

Ask the person grieving what they need. You might arrange for delivery of meals or needed items, for instance, or take up a collection to give a gift card for a food delivery service such as Grub-Hub or Door Dash for the family. Or, offer to assist with technology, like setting up video calls, or other ways of keeping in touch.

 **If you or a loved one is struggling with grief or loss, reach out to a licensed mental health professional for support.**

Important!

Remember to practice self-care

✓ **Expect to go through some, if not all, of the normal stages of grief.**

You may feel: denial, guilt, anger, bargaining, and finally, acceptance.

Be kind to, and patient with, yourself.

✓ **Try to keep a routine.**

Eat healthy foods, stay hydrated, and get outside daily, even for a short stroll.

✗ **Limit COVID-related news and social media.**

It can add to your distress.



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