



When We Cannot Be with Someone When They Die

Right now, across the country, many people are facing the painful reality of not being with their loved ones at the end of their lives. Due to COVID-19, hospitals, senior living facilities, nursing homes, and hospices are not allowing visitors. Although many people are not present when someone in their life dies, this has become a reality for an increasing number of people.

Regardless of how your loved one died since COVID-19 physical distancing guidelines were put in place, grief has become a reality for many. For a country that rarely acknowledged or gave much attention to grief, it has become an increasingly common conversation. In addition to not being with a loved one at the time of death, many grief rituals (both secular and religious) have been put on hold or done on a smaller scale than what may have been otherwise.

Here are some things to consider when you cannot be with your person when they die:

- Being with a loved one at their time of death is not always a possibility, regardless of COVID-19. Consider sending a letter or calling your loved one to tell them how you feel about them and what they mean to you
- Keep a journal and write the things you wish you could tell your loved one, memories you have with them, and the legacy they have left among their family, friends, co-workers, etc.
- Be kind to yourself. Some decisions are out of our control. You need to grieve the missed opportunities to be present during the dying process by talking to people in your support system (for example: friends, clergy, a grief support group, or a therapist who has experience with grief work)
- Grief rituals help individuals and families face the realities of death while receiving physical and emotional support from one's community. Due to physical distancing, many rituals such as funerals, viewings, memorials, celebration of life, etc. are not happening or are happening on a very small scale. This may lead to feeling more isolated in the grieving process or a delayed onset of grief



- Understand that while some may be grateful for the opportunity to spend more time at home holding space for their grief, others may find it particularly painful to be in their home filled with memories and pictures of their loved one, making the void even more palpable.
- Consider ways in which you can connect with your support system including social media, videoconferencing, or physically distant interactions (following government guidelines in your area). Ask people to share memories, stories, and pictures with you. Plan a gathering to honor your loved one once physical distancing restrictions are lifted
- It is important to remember that there is no right or wrong way to grieve. Create space for your grief in a way that makes sense to you (journal, prayer, meditation, time in nature, exercise, telling stories, sharing pictures, etc.).
- For some, grief may be a tidal wave of emotions while for others it is an ever-changing onslaught of unpredictable waves. Your grief, like your relationship to the person who died, is unique and warrants your attention.
- For more information about grief, please visit our handouts for grievers: <https://www.ourhouse-grief.org/grief-pages/>

[www.OurHouse-Grief.org](https://www.ourhouse-grief.org)

West LA Location: 310-473-1511 | Woodland Hills Location: 818-222-3344