

The Human Relations Service
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Managing Grief Related to Illness or Loss of Loved Ones During the COVID-19 Pandemic
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We are currently experiencing a profound health crisis stemming from COVID-19 that will touch the lives of every person in our community. Social isolation and limitations on visitors to hospitals leaves the community with new challenges for grieving loved ones lost to COVID-19 or other losses unrelated to, but complicated by, the pandemic.

Understanding Grief

- You may experience a range of emotions and move in and out of them day-to-day or moment-to-moment.
- People who are grieving often cycle through a range of emotions, including sadness, loneliness, anger, anxiety, guilt, and at unexpected times may take breaks from these heavier emotional experiences and feel much lighter.
- Processing the loss and going through these emotional states can be exhausting, give yourself a break from your responsibilities if you need to.

Self-Care and Daily Routine

- A daily routine can help with getting physical and emotional needs met and can make space for the mental energy required by grieving.
- Allow yourself to think about one day or one part of a day at a time.
- Try to eat something during mealtimes even when you're not hungry, and be sure to stay hydrated.
- Find a way to exercise that you enjoy, take a walk, do yoga, follow an exercise video, etc.
- Try to keep your sleep schedule consistent, and be sure you're leaving enough time to get a good night's sleep.
- If you like to keep a journal, writing about your experience can be a helpful way to process grief.

Make Good Use of Your Supports

- Reach out to friends, family, or mentors. Try to talk or text with one supportive person every day.
- Many grief support groups are now available online. Grief groups can be helpful for finding connection to others with shared experiences.
- Reach out to your mental health provider or find a new therapist.

Restrictions on Visitation in Hospitals

- Given technologically limited access to loved ones in the hospital, it can be helpful to think ahead about how you want to use your virtual time with them.
- Work on a project, such as a piece of art, a poem or a short video, to share virtually with your loved one in the hospital. This is also a good way for children to reach out to relatives in medical quarantine.
- You may want to write a letter or leave a voicemail for your loved one, this allows you more time and space to think about the relationship and about what you want to say.

Honoring Religious or Personal Traditions

- Talk to your religious leader about how to adapt traditions to accommodate current restrictions.
- Host a virtual memorial, candle-lighting or storytelling event.
- Plan a memorial event or service that will take place after social distancing rules are relaxed.
- Find a way to share memories of your loved one, such as making a playlist of their favorite music or distributing photographs.