



# SUPPORTING THE BEREAVED DURING COVID-19

People continue to grieve during this pandemic whether a death is the result of COVID-19 or another cause. **Those grieving need support and empathy especially during this time of social distancing.** You may not be able to hug and visit, but during this pandemic we can learn that there are many meaningful ways to be supportive that are far better than flowers and lasagna.

## 1. WRITE A LETTER

Take the time to write a letter to someone who is grieving. If you know the person who died, share a memory of that person and name attributes that made you fond of them. Writing a letter to a grieving person can make some people feel anxious. You do not have to be a great writer to express that you care. A good condolence letter is not about saying the right words to take the pain away, but rather affirming the loss and expressing empathy.

## 2. BE CONSISTENT

COVID-19 has greatly disrupted schedules and our attention spans. The bereaved do not need you checking them off your list of things to do. Someone who is grieving wants to know that they and their grief matter at this time. Add a time to your calendar to consistently call, send a text or email, and check-in with the person. Keep them in your thoughts so that when you see an article, video, or something that might speak to them, you can share it and let them know they are on your mind. Be consistent. This is a time when it is easy to be forgotten.

## 3. HOLD BACK YOUR ANXIETY

You may be feeling very anxious about COVID-19 and how it is impacting you, your family, and friends. When offering support to someone, hold back your anxiety and fears. Release your concerns with someone else so that you can be fully present for the person you are offering support to at this time. When offering support, it is important to remember this is not about you, but about the person who is grieving. Follow their lead on the things they want to talk about, whether that be COVID-19, their grief, or something else. If they ask you how you are coping with the pandemic, that is not an invitation to unload; hold back and respond with a simple, "we are holding up."



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## 4. ACKNOWLEDGE THESE TIMES BY NAMING IT

This pandemic is a terrible time to experience a loss. Not only are funerals put on hold, friends and family cannot gather around each other to support one another. These can be very lonely times to grieve. On top of the social distancing, people are distracted by their own fears, uncertainties, and disruptions to their lives. It is important to acknowledge that this is a difficult time to experience a death by naming it. Follow up by asking, “how have people been supporting you?”, and if you are sincere about it, “if you are lonely or want to talk about your person, you can call me. I will answer or call you right back.”

## 5. MAKE A DONATION

At a time like this, it can be comforting to know something meaningful and good is being done in memory of a loved one. Make a gift to a charity in memory of the person who died. But do not stop there. Pick up the phone and speak to the grieving: “I made a donation in memory of your dad to X charity. How are you holding up today...?” This gesture can be the entryway into a supportive conversation.