



## Grief During a Pandemic

The past few months have brought much change to all of our lives, and with that change has come fear, uncertainty, stress and anxiety. We have had to adjust to working from home, kids learning remotely, and distancing from those we love. It is especially challenging if someone you love has died during the pandemic, whether or not their death was a result of COVID-19.

If your loved one has recently died, these tips offer suggestions for grieving during this incredibly difficult and isolating period.

- **Acknowledge that we are in a different time.** This helps to manage our expectations of ourselves and others. Living in a pandemic has changed so much of how society functions. This includes our daily lives, as well as how we care for the sick and dying and how we care for the bereaved. Our sense of control has been challenged and routines that would normally bring comfort are not necessarily possible now, which can increase feeling of isolation and loss.
- **Understand the nature of grief.** Most people are not aware of how complex grief is and that is a very normal response to loss. Grief can also come at a time of other losses, such as being diagnosed with a serious illness or losing a job. Grief is unique to everyone and there is no 'right' way to grieve.
- **Give yourself permission to grieve.** Acknowledging the many mixed emotions that come with grief is important and during this time some of these emotions may feel more intense. During COVID-19, there have been changes put in place that result in many other losses that need to be mourned, such as not being at the hospital when a loved one dies, or not being able to hold a funeral or memorial service.
- **Create a daily routine.** This is always important during grief as structure provides some stability, but even more important during this pandemic. Try to get out of bed at the same time each day and have your meals at regular times. Break your day into small chunks of time and carve out time to grieve. Being sad is normal and taking time to acknowledge this is important to healing.
- **Focus on self-care.** Grief is stressful. Making time to take care of yourself can lessen that stress. Eat well, even when you don't feel like it. Make exercise part of your daily routine, even a short walk. Try an online meditation app. Limit alcohol and processed foods. Keep a journal and limit your media exposure during this time.
- **Reach out for support.** Stay connected to your family and friends. COVID is making it harder but technology makes it possible. Connect daily even when you don't feel like it. Consider joining an online support group. Arrange a call with someone from your spiritual or religious group, or a virtual appointment with a grief counsellor.
- **Adapt rituals.** Honoring your loved one through alternative ways can provide meaningful connections with others. Plan a virtual celebration of life, where people can come together to reminisce and share photos. Consider writing your loved one a letter, especially if you were unable to say a proper goodbye. Make a playlist of their favourite music and share it with others in their memory.
- **Plan for post-COVID.** Making plans help us to feel more in control. Make a list of tasks that will need to be completed once restrictions ease further.



# Meaningful Ideas for Funerals and Memorial Services during COVID-19

Funeral, memorial services or other end of life rituals are vital to healthy grief. They offer a space to share stories, be comforted, and move towards acknowledging the reality of a loved one's death. COVID-19 has limited our options to gather together for such events. Here are some alternative ideas for families to consider:

*(adapted from What's Your Grief)*

## STREAM THE SERVICE

Even if people cannot be physically present, the service can be brought to the people through streaming. This can even be a small virtual service now and then you can make plans for an in-person event later when restrictions ease.

<https://whatsyourgrief.com/how-to-live-stream-a-funeral/>

## USE MUSIC

Using online platforms, such as Zoom, people can sing songs, play piano and other instruments virtually together. Record a song to be played at the service. For musically talented people, it is possible to record different tracks of a song and then edit them together.

## CREATE A VIRTUAL MEMORY BOOK

Invite people to answer questions such as: How did you meet? What did you learn from them? What is a favourite memory? Download and save these messages.



## INCLUDE THOSE WHO CAN'T BE PRESENT

People can do readings, sing songs, and share memories from a distance. Have people send pre-recorded videos to watch as part of the online service. Online platforms are available to make this possible and easier for you.

## CREATE A SLIDESHOW

Put together a digital slide show that can be shared online during the service or after for those who could not attend. Invite people to send in photos of your loved one to include. Notes of remembrance or words of support can also be added for others to see. Sharing memories this way can be very helpful for the grief journey.

## COLLECTIVE RITUALS

Choose a date and invite family and friends to do a small personal ritual all at the same time. Such as doing a toast, listening to song they loved, saying a prayer, or lighting a candle.

## CREATE A MEMORIAL SPACE

Plant a tree; make a small display of photos or other remembrances in your home or garden. Doing this as a family is a meaningful way for children and adults to share memories and say goodbye.

Remember, grief and honouring/remembering our loved ones is not a one-time event. It is something you can do many times in many different ways as life moves forward. Although you may not be able to have a traditional funeral or memorial now, you can plan for something in the future.



# Road to Gratitude - A Community Scavenger Hunt

We wanted our first event, to launch the resuming of our grief and support services at Holmberg House, to reflect a sense of gratefulness to the community for all the support that was shown during the uncertain months of COVID-19. We were overwhelmed with sponsors and donors who reached out and gave to our charity to ensure our services to the community could continue. The Road to Gratitude was a huge success and we want to thank all the sponsors, volunteers, and participants who made it such a fun afternoon. This was our first ever Scavenger Hunt event, but we hope to run this again in future due to all the positive feedback we received. A full list of the event sponsors and more photos can be found on our website.



## CALLING ALL BASEBALL FANS!

This life size bronze statue of baseball legend, Ty Cobb, will be available for auction. Link goes live on September 16th. Statue is up for display now at Fraser Valley Metal Recyclers on Industrial Way. All the proceeds will be donated to the Abbotsford Hospice Society. Starting bid will be set at \$2000.



## COMING EVENTS

**AUGUST 10**  
Kids Cooking Comforts Class

**AUGUST 19**  
Mini Donkey Meet-n-Greet

**AUGUST 22**  
Youth Horse Day Camp

**SEPTEMBER**  
Fall Harvest Event  
date and details coming soon

More information on all our upcoming events on our website:  
[www.abbotsfordhospice.org/events](http://www.abbotsfordhospice.org/events)

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