



Grieving during COVID-19

By: [CVH Team](#)

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed how we live and how we grieve in ways we would not have expected to be possible. If someone close to you died before or during COVID, you are finding your way through grief in unprecedented and unsettling times. Common grief emotions include worry, helplessness, fear, guilt, sadness, irritability, anger, and loneliness. While these emotions are normal, the pandemic may add to your grief and complicate how you move through it.

Human connection – having someone to talk with or enjoy quiet moments with – helps people to move through grief. The pandemic has severed many of those connections. You may not be able to be physically present with others who support you. Grief is often isolating. If you cannot receive a hug or meet in person, you may feel even more alone, isolated, or even abandoned.

If the death occurred before or during the pandemic, many common situations may make your grief more difficult:

- You had to limit, delay, or not hold funerals, celebrations of life, and other rituals. You may feel a deep sense of sorrow or guilt that the person's life is not honoured in the way you wanted. You may miss the comfort and mutual support these events and rituals can provide.
- You might feel like the chaos and enormity of the pandemic overshadow your grief. The entire world has been affected by the pandemic. But, every life matters. The death of the person you are grieving means your world has changed forever.
- You might also feel that your grief is increased by the collective grief we are feeling about the pandemic and other tragic events.

If the death occurred during the pandemic, other factors may make your grief more difficult:

- You were not able to be physically present because of public health restrictions. You may not have been able to see and support the person who was dying. You may not have had the chance to say and do everything you would have wanted to before the death.
- You may have concerns about how the pandemic affected the quality of care the person received. There are media reports of staff, equipment, and medication shortages and changes in priorities for medical care. If you were not able to see and support the person who was dying, you might have questions about the person's comfort and care.

What can help:

- If you feel sad or guilty that you were not able to visit the dying person or be present at the death:
 - Try to take comfort in knowing that nothing short of a global crisis, entirely out of your control, took away the option of being physically present with the person who is dying.
 - Understand that your connection to the person nearing death is not rooted in physical proximity. Throughout your relationship, you created powerful connections that exist beyond the bedside.
- If you have questions about how the person was cared for or how they died, you can ask for more information. Talk to a nurse or doctor on their care team. You may have to be patient, given the current healthcare crisis. Knowing more about what happened may help you feel

better.

- Think about other ways to honour the person's memory. You may be planning something in the future when restrictions are lifted, but in the meantime, you might consider:
 - A virtual gathering using technology that often is free (e.g. Zoom, Skype, Facetime) and allows people to take part virtually no matter where they live
 - Livestreaming a small graveside service or memorial gathering (according to local social distancing regulations) with smartphones or tablets
 - Establishing a Facebook or other webpage where you and others can post a biography, eulogies/tributes, spiritual or religious readings, poems or prayers, photographs, videos, audio recordings, condolences and reminiscences

It is OK to not feel OK. These are unprecedented times and now more than ever it is important to find opportunities to connect with others, to access resources to help understand what you are feeling, and to access resources to support you with difficult feelings and emotions. We have compiled a list of programs, services and resources that are available free of charge [here](#).