



## Supporting those grieving during COVID-19

COVID-19 has presented challenges for all of us. One of challenges we have been discussing at Hospice Peterborough is how to support our family, friends and neighbours when they experience the death of a loved one. Due to physical distancing we are unable to offer traditional comforts such as sharing a hug or holding the hand of those grieving. While some common expressions of sympathy may not be safe at this time, there are many gestures and ways to connect and support those grieving in our community. Here are some ideas of how you may support your grieving family member, friend or neighbour at this time:

1. Know that your emotional presence and support are enough. Don't feel like you have to fix their grief. Just listen and allow them to talk. There is an excellent children's book that illustrates the importance of listening called "The Rabbit Listened" by Cori Doerrfeld. Here is a video of librarian Jennifer Smith at Dorchester County Library reading the book: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PzyThHYtcyE&t=12s>
2. Call, text or e-mail to let them know you are thinking of them.
3. Share a favorite memory or quality you admired in the person who has died. It is especially meaningful when you share this in a way that those grieving can revisit that memory as they navigate their grief. This includes typing, writing or recording a video of you sharing the memory.
4. If you have photos of the person who has died, share them.
5. Ask if those grieving would like to connect and remember together using video-conferencing. This may be a time for a couple people to connect or a chance for a larger group to share in their grief together.
6. Let them know about [www.mygrief.ca](http://www.mygrief.ca) and [www.kidsgrief.ca](http://www.kidsgrief.ca). These online resources help those grieving to understand and work through their grief or support children who are grieving.
7. Share a favourite song that reminds you of the person who has died or a song that has helped you through a difficult time.
8. Avoid using clichés like "He's in a better place", "She wouldn't want you to be sad", or "You have to be strong for...". If you don't know what to say just listen.
9. Offer practical help such as picking up groceries or supplies or helping with yard work.
10. Arrange to have friends and family do a small ritual on the same day and time. Ideas include lighting a candle, reading a poem, listening to a song or giving a toast.

There will come a time where we are able to offer hugs and remember those who have died at funerals or celebrations of life. These gestures may help us to honour someone who has died, to offer support and to connect until that time.

