



Grieving from a Distance through COVID-19

Ambiguous grief happens when our grieving process is disrupted. During the pandemic, we may not be able to connect with a loved one, client, or community member before they die, or attend their funeral to grieve collectively with others. This kind of grief brings up feelings of frustration, helplessness, and resentment on top of the sadness and longing of grief. Here are a few ideas for us and our communities to find ways to mourn those who have passed during the pandemic and give our ambiguous grief an outlet.

Prayer or Sending Loving Thoughts

It means a lot to people who are ill or dying to know we are thinking about them, praying, and keeping them in our hearts and thoughts. Those close to death have a heightened sensitivity that can receive and be affected by prayers, good intentions, and loving thoughts even from a distance. Set up a dedicated area in your house or workplace for mourning. This space could be decorated with pictures, flowers, candles, a belonging of the deceased or their name written on paper. Spend time there thinking about them, pray for them, talk to them, say their name, share a memory, or play them a song. Regardless of your spiritual beliefs, these practices can support our grieving when we cannot visit people in the hospital/hospice or are not able to attend a wake or funeral.



Virtual Wakes, Memorials, Funerals

Online platforms like Skype, WhatsApp, and Zoom are keeping us connected to loved ones right now and can also be used for mourning. An online funeral, wake, or memorial can be a substitute for a community gathering or a placeholder until we can gather in groups again. During previous pandemics, people were empowered to lead their own death and grief rituals when spiritual leaders couldn't facilitate in-person. We can also take that initiative if it's not safe to be in a group with spiritual leaders or Elders. Here is a [step-by-step guide](https://www.talkdeath.com/how-to-hold-a-virtual-memorial-service-a-step-by-step-guide/) to peer-led memorials or wakes published by Talk Death (<https://www.talkdeath.com/how-to-hold-a-virtual-memorial-service-a-step-by-step-guide/>). Keep in mind that feelings of loneliness or energy depletion can come after a video call, especially for people in self-isolation. Plan an activity or some self-care after a group call to transition back into spending time alone.



Obituaries and Memorial websites

Obituaries are a way to grieve from a distance and let the community know about a person who has died. But they're also so much more than that. They can be a collaborative effort, gathering stories of remembrance from friends and community members. They can be an act of community care. Obituaries can keep a person's memory alive for the reader by evoking the spirit and personality of the person who died. Online memorial sites, such as www.mykeeper.com (free), are an extension of obituaries where people can share memories and stories of the deceased.

