

Acknowledging and coping with grief from a COVID-19 death



The world is reeling from the impact of COVID-19.

If your loved one has died due to COVID-19, you may feel your own world has turned upside down.

You may be experiencing different feelings. You may feel out of control and upset. You may feel abandoned, isolated or lonely. You could feel angry or let down, you may feel afraid. You may feel that this is unfair. You may even feel both relieved that the worst has happened and is now over, and guilty for this relief. You may jump from one feeling to another, the nature of grief is that it shifts and changes.

Talking to others about what you are experiencing and feeling may help. You may also experience people seeking ways to be kind to you and being concerned about you as you mourn. People may acknowledge your pain and seek to comfort you, even if they cannot visit. Try to keep connected with people as much as you can.

A relationship is made up of all of life's shared times, this can never be taken away from you.

On unexpected death

The nature of the COVID-19 illness is that it comes on relatively suddenly and in that way it is unexpected. You may feel unprepared for the loss of your loved one and also experience shock.

It may take you some time to fully realise what has happened and what it means for you now and in the future. You may find yourself going over the events and re-telling the story of what has happened. Talking about what has happened is a way of coming to terms with its reality.

After a death, family and friends may seek to come together and share their experiences and loss. Due to the current restrictions, coming together physically will not be possible. However, you can connect with others outside your household in different ways such as, by telephone, text, email, video call, or in groups through video conference calls. Do try to stay connected.



On not being there

You or your family members may not have been able to spend much time with your loved one prior to the death, or be present at the time of your loved one's death.

This may make it more difficult to feel that the death is real or bring up feelings of regret, anger or even guilt.

It can be hard to find meaning and peace/comfort at times like this. The COVID-19 pandemic has meant people like yourself have had to make very difficult sacrifices to protect the health of others. While you will of course be thinking about all that happened including death, try not to dwell on these painful aspects. A relationship is made up of all of life's shared times, this can never be taken away from you.

On saying goodbye

The burial or cremation convened for your loved one will not be what you would have planned. Try to consider it as a step along the way.

In the meantime, take time to find ways of saying a private goodbye. This may be through prayer and reflection, through writing to the person or organising mementos and photographs of them into a display.

Perhaps set a time aside when family members and extended friends will light a candle in their own homes, perhaps while reading a special poem or prayer, or listening to some music that was important to your loved ones.

On looking after yourself

These are very exceptional times and a hard time to be grieving.

- You need to consider the most basic things, so eat well and stay hydrated. Try to get a little bit of regular exercise each day – even if that is moving around in your own home or garden.
- Even though you may not feel like it, get up at a normal time, try to keep to a routine.

- Keep as connected as you can and talk with people about how you're doing.
- Look especially to connect with people who will accept you as you are at this time, and allow you to be yourself – however that is (sad, relieved, up and down).
- Grief takes time, and it changes over time. If you are concerned about how you're doing seek information (we have indicated some Useful Resources below), talk to your GP or contact our national Bereavement Support Line 1800 80 70 77.



We offer you our condolences and sincerely hope that you will have the help and support you need over the coming time.

Useful Resources

- National Bereavement Support Line (Freephone, 10am to 1pm, Monday to Friday) <https://hospicefoundation.ie/bereavementsupportline>
- Bereaved.ie
- Minding your mental health during the Covid-19 pandemic (HSE Mental Health) <https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/mental-health/covid-19/bereavement-and-grief-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic.html>
- Children and grief www.childhoodbereavement.ie
- Death and bereavement during COVID-19 (Citizen information) https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/death/death_and_bereavement_during_covid19.html
- COVID-19 (Coronavirus): A guide for the bereaved (Department of Health) <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/f43301-covid-19-coronavirus-a-guide-for-the-bereaved/>