



## Rethinking Rituals – Tips for Honoring Your Loved One During COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted so many aspects of our lives. As we navigate what it means to connect with those we love while remaining physically distant, we must rethink celebrations, rites of passage, and rituals related to mourning. When someone dies, we typically gather together and engage in a ritual, such as a funeral or memorial service. For many, our rituals involve both connection to loved ones, and time spent honoring the life of the deceased. During this global pandemic, the traditional ways we mourn—gathering together, bringing meals, and giving hugs—may feel unsafe and ill-advised. Additionally, physical distancing has impacted our ability to be present for the death, to say good-bye in person, and to be with loved ones; this may feel uncomfortable or upsetting. It is okay to feel this way. The absence of increased closeness we crave is highlighted by the need to remain physically distant and can add a complicating layer to the grief process. Engaging in a ritual may help to acknowledge these emotions and honor your loved one.

### Why a Ritual

Rituals around death help us accept and acknowledge the reality of the death, while also providing an opportunity to communicate openly and honestly about the deceased with people we trust. Rituals serve as our way of maintaining a connection with, or cherishing the memory of, our loved one after they are gone.

Take time to grieve the fact that you aren't able to be present in the way that you want to; be kind to yourself as you determine what feels okay for you. There is no right way to grieve.

### Involving Others

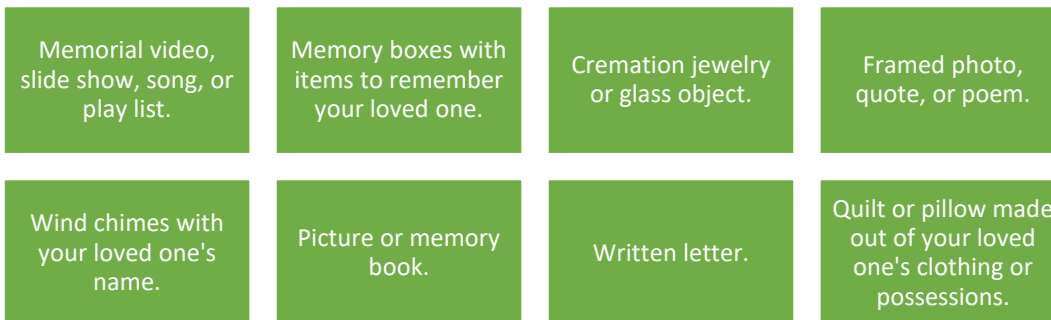
Grief can be an all-consuming experience. It is important to pay attention to your grief emotions and it can be helpful to think creatively about how to connect with others in this process. This may be of particular importance when engaging in personal faith practices.

#### Connect Creatively

- Tell stories about your loved ones with others.
- Gather a recipe book of your loved one's favorite recipes.
- Write a note of gratitude to someone who made a difference in your loved one's life.
- Light a candle with others at a certain time of the day.
- Have a physically distanced picnic at your loved one's favorite place.
- Have a movie night and watch your loved one's favorite movie.
- Pray or make a shiva call via a virtual platform.
- Pray virtually with friends and family every day.
- Participate in a funeral, burial, shiva, wake, or memorial service via an online platform.
- During a memorial service, place something in the pew or seat that represents people who could not physically be there.

## Create Something to Honor Your Loved One

The loss of a loved one brings with it many intense emotions. By creating something to celebrate your loved one's memory, you can honor the special place they have in your life. Talking about your creation with family or friends may also be a way to receive gentle, loving care during this difficult time.



## Create a Space of Remembrance for Your Loved One

It can feel difficult to escape from the all-consuming feelings of loss. Creating a space of remembrance may be particularly helpful when you feel overwhelmed by your grief; it can serve both as a special place to celebrate your loved one, and as a place to go to let out your emotions.



## Do Something that Evokes the Essence of Your Loved One

During times of grief and mourning, we need increased connection and emotional support, and it can feel additionally painful not to be able to grieve in the way that you would like. Engaging in an activity that evokes the essence of your loved one can increase feelings of connection. Invite a family member or friend to join in with you.

