

Psychosocial Support During COVID-19 Training Video Series

Video Three: After Death Care & Bereavement

Key Messages

When someone we care about dies, we come together. We come together to share memories, to give and receive support to one another – but during a pandemic - our ability to come together is impacted. Many of the traditions we rely on to assist us with our grief, and to mark our mourning are not possible due to the risk of disease transmission.

Unfortunately, there is a high risk of complicated grief due to the interruption of usual death bed rituals and grief practices.

Service providers can support grieving loved ones, both in person and at a distance, by focusing on the following:

Listen, listen, listen – Remember, you don't have to fix it. Simply be present. Listen.

The important messaging you are aiming to send is “I am here. You are not alone”

Go Back to the Basics:

Active listening

Use of silence

Summarizing and paraphrasing

Normalize

Support - Identify and build on strengths and signs of resilience

Educate - Bereaved individuals also need concrete clear information on the management of remains and funeral arrangement. It can be helpful to have a conversation with the patient and/or SDM prior to death about their wishes, and facilitate contact with the funeral service of their choice who can attend to their informational needs.

Options for Bereavement Support Groups during a Pandemic & Social Distancing Practices:

- Create Facebook group with family and friends in memory of the deceased person, or as a support group forum.
- Join a Facebook Support Group that already exists
- Have a video chat support group with family and friends (ie. Skype, Zoom)

- Participate in a virtual support group via a supportive organization such as a local hospice, counselling agency or Bereaved Families of Ontario

Options for Funerals/Celebration of Life during a Pandemic & Social Distancing Practices:

- Have a 2 part Service - or Even postpone.
- Stream the service
- Include people in the service even if they aren't AT the service.
- Crowd-source a virtual photo slideshow.
- Create a slideshow of memories or other words of remembrance.
- Sing and play music together (in real-time).
- Record a song as a family to be played at the service.
- Create a virtual-memorial book.
- Have family members and friends all do their own small ritual at the same day/time.
- Create a small memorial in your home or garden.