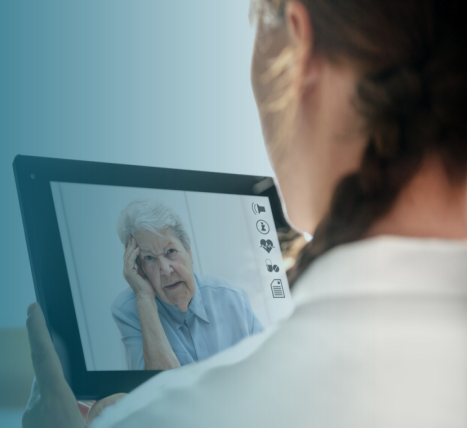


Social Support and Bereavement during the Coronavirus (COVID) Outbreak



With the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, we are increasingly isolated from normal activities that bring us into contact with others. Going to work, shopping, visiting the library or making arrangements to catch up with friends and family are impacted by the need for personal distancing and physical isolation. In addition to these daily life changes, each day brings new and distressing information that adds another layer of anxiety.

For someone who is bereaved, physical isolation and personal distancing can add to feeling alone and make grief seem overwhelming. Practical concerns and worry about our current situation, may make it harder to address our grief. This can result in our grief being stifled, delayed or intensified.

A key focus of bereavement support is to encourage bereaved individuals to avoid isolating themselves and stay connected with other people. Contact with friends, family, colleagues and neighbours can be one of the most helpful ways to cope after someone close to us dies. So how can this be done in the current socially restricted environment?

Keep regular contact with people via the phone, email, text, Internet or social media

Although you may not be able to see people in person, make a commitment to initiate contact with at least one person in some way daily. Try to stay in contact with people, even if you cannot visit. Consider sending a letter, card or note to let them know you are thinking of them. Talk to your neighbours by phone or text. Use FaceTime or Skype to connect with others.

Look after yourself and get rest

Try to get outside into the fresh air or sunlight each day. Try to keep to regular routines of getting up and dressed and eating meals at the usual time. Make time for daily exercise.

Seek and offer practical help to friends, family or neighbours

If you are finding it difficult to do things for yourself, ask for help from those near you. We know that many people struggling with grief are good caregivers, but often find it difficult to ask for support. Reach out to others who might be finding it tough, you may be able to help each other.

Download the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement's *MyGrief* App for immediate information about how to receive bereavement support or how to support someone who is grieving.

Contact the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement on (03) 9265 2100 to arrange to speak with a specialist bereavement counsellor about telephone and online bereavement counselling.