

TIPS FOR AN UNPRECEDENTED TIME: HOW DO WE SAY GOOD-BYE, WHEN WE CAN'T ATTEND A FUNERAL?

As our world grapples with COVID-19 and we are all being urged by our governments and public health and safety officials to practice social distancing and avoid public gatherings, a very real problem presents itself: planning and attending funerals. In addition to the deaths caused by COVID-19, other unrelated deaths will continue to occur each passing day. This has left many people wondering how to go about honoring the death of their loved ones while also complying with these public health recommendations.

Here are a few options that families and funeral professionals are practicing around the world, in order to allow families and friends a chance to grieve the loss of their loved ones safely.

1. **Livestream, so people can attend remotely.** This option allows the closest family members to be present at the funeral while allowing everyone else who wishes to attend to be “present” online and participate in the service via livestream. TribuCast is a company that provides livestream services of funerals that not only allows family and friends to view the service from their devices, but also participate in them if they wish to do so via a live chat option. For more information on this company and their services, visit: <https://tribucast.com/>.
2. **For those without access to internet and the ability to livestream, consider a free teleconference service such as www.freeconferencecall.com or a phone tree.** One family member or friend calling the next on the list and so on.
3. **Consider an outdoor location.** Health officials recommend that if public gatherings cannot be avoided, a distance of at least six feet should be maintained between you and those around you. Therefore, funerals held in outdoor locations with lots of space are a potential option, but attendance should still be kept to a minimum.
4. **Postpone services until a later date.** As this situation is changing rapidly, it may be in your best interest to postpone the service to a later date. This can be done by those who wish to have the body buried or cremated. For those opting for a burial, hold a small intimate service with only the closest family members present. Then, select a tentative date for a memorial service that more people can attend. For those opting for cremation, you can similarly hold a small gathering at the crematorium or funeral home if you wish, and then schedule a tentative date for a larger memorial service.
5. **Alternatively, individuals and families can take a moment to light a candle, release a balloon, plant a seed, or any number of intimate “remembrance rituals”, then take a photo to share with the rest of their family and friends – either in person, by mail, or on-line.**

In the meantime, here are some additional ways that you can support yourself, your family, and friends who grieving the death of a loved one:

1. Send a condolence card, flowers, [weighted bear](#) or a [care package](#).
2. Register for a free, on-line [support group](#). For the time being, Grief's Journey and HEALing Embrace are sustaining their programs in an on-line setting.