

# Remembering a loved one while social distancing



**Funerals have been severely affected by coronavirus social distancing rules, causing great emotional distress to thousands of people. But there is still a way to bring meaning and find solace in these difficult times. Compiled with the support of independent funeral directors from around the UK, here is our advice for remembering a loved one, if you're unable to attend a funeral or want to do something beyond watching a service on FaceTime or via a webcast.**

- Quiet, undisturbed contemplation is incredibly therapeutic when you are grieving. So why not place a bouquet of the deceased's favourite flowers in a corner of the garden if you have one, or a room in your home, and set aside time to sit with the flowers and remember the person. If flowers are unavailable, perhaps there's a particular plant your friend or loved one was fond of. You could also light a candle in their memory and sit quietly for 15 minutes - or as long as you want - with the person in mind.
- Create a free online tribute and share it with friends and family on social media. Most funeral directors' websites feature free online memorial pages that offer a facility to set up a tribute to the person who has died. This can include videos and you can light a virtual candle to remember them by. Check with your funeral director for details. Many online memorial pages often provide an opportunity to donate to a charity in memory of the deceased. This can also bring comfort and provide much-needed support to charities that are struggling now due to the pandemic.
- Read some poetry, prayers, or verse, or maybe a section from the deceased's favourite book, then video it and post it on social media and tag other mourners. Read the passage and then talk about why those words are important and what they meant to your relationship with, or opinion of the deceased.
- If a service is taking place but you're unable to attend digitally, ask friends and family to send stories and thoughts of your loved one along with photographs. Look through these whilst playing a piece of personal music in the background at the time of the funeral. If you're not there in person you can still be present emotionally. Also, ask those who did attend to take pictures of the coffin and share these with you and perhaps let you know about anything that was placed in the coffin, what readings there were and which music was played.

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- Write a letter to the person who has died and include everything you would have said, or perhaps should have said but didn't have the time or a suitable opportunity to do so. Keep the letter safe to inter with the ashes, or perhaps bury in a favourite part of your garden. Each time you look at that spot, you will be reminded of the person, creating a lasting, positive mental legacy.
- Get creative. Find your peace in music, writing, drawing, or reading. There is great comfort in artistic expression. And if you are at home with children due to the school closures and the funeral is for a parent or grandparent, get little ones to paint a picture that makes them think of the person and hang it on the fridge or somewhere for all to see. Not only is it really important to involve children to help them express their emotions and understand grief, but it will also bring a smile to your face.
- For a set day, wear an item of clothing in the deceased's favourite colour. By doing this you'll be able to give the deceased a personalised funeral and you'll think positively about them all day.
- Create a plan for a larger meaningful thanksgiving event after social distancing restrictions have passed - this is something your funeral director will be able to assist with. Some funeral directors have introduced 'keeping in touch' to make sure families are not without support, which can take the form of Facebook community pages and online catchups.
- Use your daily exercise as a chance to go for a walk in a space (if open) that the deceased loved. Be mindful of social distancing rules and avoid lingering in one place for too long if the area is busy.
- Hold a virtual wake. Gather a selection of friends via Zoom, Skype, or WhatsApp. Have a glass of something ready to raise a toast to the deceased and have a good old chinwag about the person, reflecting on happy memories. To help break the ice with people who might not be used to talking on video apps, ask everyone to think of something that reminds them of the deceased before the call. It could be a memory of an occasion, something they said, or what you liked about them.
- Many local independent garden centres are still open and are offering a delivery service. If you have a garden with some space, order a bench and ask your funeral director to create a plaque commemorating the deceased. With the summer approaching, spend the warm evenings sitting outside enjoying the fond memories of your loved one or friend.

And remember, don't be alone during this time of isolation. Keep in touch with friends and family even if you don't feel like it. If this isn't an option, ask your funeral director if they have a bereavement support group that you can tap into. Whilst the group won't be meeting in person at the moment, there is likely to be some who will talk on the phone or via video conference call. As a result of social distancing measures, most funeral directors are adapting their bereavement groups, meaning support should still be available. There are also free online bereavement services, such as SAIF Care Chat, which is available at [saif.org.uk](http://saif.org.uk)



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