

***„If something seems impossible –
change things to make it happen in a different way”***

Possibilities and opportunities to support living, dying and grief without physical presence

Under the current circumstances regarding Corona Virus we would like to share some ideas how you can deal and cope with dying, death and grief and how you can stay emotionally close to others in times of necessary social distance.

- ✓ Although it is not possible to visit people in person, contact affected people directly, actively, regularly and reliably – do so via telephone, text messages, WhatsApp, FaceTime, Skype, Zoom or other videoconference tools, email, letters etc.
- ✓ **NB:** Before taking any actions with regards to the suggestions mentioned below, please discuss them with the staff of the care organisation, caring for your loved one, and be informed on any current (legal) limitations / restrictions. The carers can support you in your communication with the patient. However, there is much pressure on them in the current situation. Also the staff will really appreciate your appreciation and thanks. Please be aware that some ideas might not be feasible due to lack of resources on the carers' side.
- ✓ If a family member is hospitalized (e.g. in a hospice, palliative care unit, hospital or in a care home) we suggest using multiple ways of communication. Try to find support in establishing technical tools for communication. If appropriate, organize the handover of small presents (e.g. photographs, letters etc.) to the patient if permitted.
- ✓ We encourage you to record voice messages and send these to terminally ill and dying people.
- ✓ Consider writing a letter or card to the patient.
- ✓ Search for songs, lyrics or poems the patient and you like(s).
- ✓ Organize together with the staff of the care organization how and when those gifts will be delivered to the patient. If handovers are not possible due to current restrictions photos of these gifts can be sent to the patient.
- ✓ Use your creative powers to express your bond with the patient – there are no limits to imagination. If children are involved: support them in drawing or crafting farewell gifts. You may create such presents yourself (e.g. handprints on cushions or photo collages etc.).
- ✓ If the situation allows, you may ask the staff of the organisation where the patient is hospitalized to take a photo of the gifts after they were handed over.

- ✓ Flowers from the garden, letters and cards with some personal notes or drawings of your children, a piece of cake etc. deposited in front of the house door may give joy and consolation to other sick or affected people. When considering this, please be aware of any restrictions concerning your leaving the house/flat.

Farewell after death

- ✓ Prepare and deliver farewell gifts (directly to the funeral director, after checking if this is possible).
- ✓ You may want to burn letters or objects representing your bond with the deceased and keep the ashes to add it to the grave at a later time.
- ✓ Creating a memorial space at home using candles, flowers and photographs might help – you might want to share some pictures of this space with family and friends as well.
- ✓ As viewing the open coffin is not allowed by law if a person died of or with a Covid-19 infection, you cannot touch the body. Maybe the funeral director will consider wrapping the corpse in a silk cloth or a cloth you provide which has been crafted or painted by you or someone of the family.
- ✓ Say goodbye by touching the coffin, the urn etc. For the time being these rituals are allowed. The only current restriction is the number of people allowed to attend a funeral.
- ✓ For the time being funerals are allowed with very close family members attending: Please contact the local authorities regarding current restrictions. There are also restrictions when conducting burials. It is not allowed to sprinkle holy water and throw soil into the tomb due to the risk of infection when passing on the shovel or the holy water sprinkler. You could bring along private holy water or soil. Please ask the funeral director if it is possible to live-stream the funeral. Some funeral homes provide this service already.
- ✓ You may want to organize a family prayer or some other ritual of farewell using videoconference tools (e.g. WhatsApp, Zoom, Skype, FaceTime etc.) or ask somebody to do so.
- ✓ Consider with the family and close friends how a farewell ceremony can be held and organized later. You may want to start planning now or support others in their planning.

If you are not personally affected but know others who are, encourage them to consider some of the options mentioned above.

Please share this information in your social environment. It is key to know that even in times of restrictions a lot can be done.

Local hospice teams will be happy to support you. For further information please visit www.hospiz.at.