

Saying Goodbye

A Resource for Care Homes



It's what we do



Our lives have changed dramatically over recent months, even more so for those living and working in care homes.

How we cope with loss for ourselves and everyone around us has become more challenging than ever.

This resource aims to support you to acknowledge the losses you, your colleagues and the people you support are experiencing during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

In collaboration with leaders in this field, we have put together some information to guide you through alternative ways in which we can give bereavement support and remember those we have lost.



It's what we do

Created by Co-op Funeralcare on the behalf of NAPA.

We would like to say thank you to all our contributors.

Kenneth McLahlan - Co-op Funeral Care, Sarah Guyan - St Christopher's Hospice, Isabelle Latham - Association for Dementia Studies, University of Worcester, Meg Bond, Danuta Lipinska, Hallmark Care Homes, Dr Amanda Taylor-Beswick - Queens University Belfast and Dr Denise Turner London Metropolitan University.

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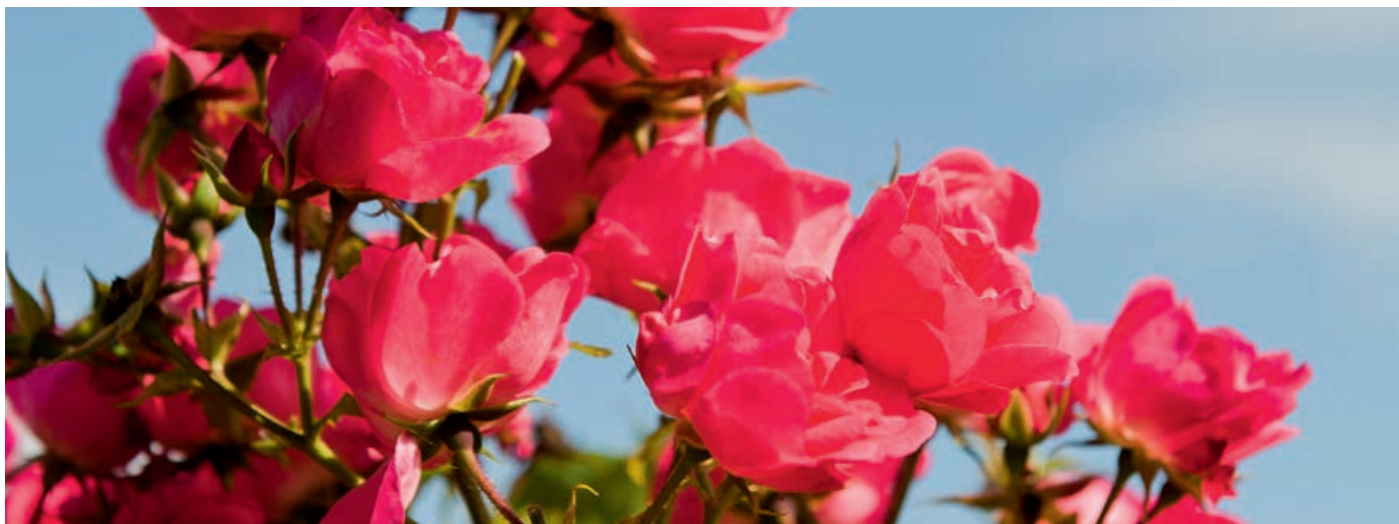
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How to say goodbye...

Provided by National Activity Providers Association
and Co-op Funeralcare

This information sheet has been developed by Co-op Funeralcare and NAPA to help support care homes during the Covid-19 pandemic. It is general advice only and a person-centred approach should always be sought. The way we say goodbye to those we care for has drastically changed as part of the effort to slow the spread of coronavirus.

Social distancing advice from the government has meant that funerals can now only be attended by a few close family members and friends, meaning many people are now no longer able to say goodbye as they normally would have, but there are things you can do to help them say goodbye without attending the funeral.

Activity and Care teams can play a vital role in coordinating this essential activity. Acknowledging loss and saying goodbye in the care home is an important part of grieving and here are some suggestions of activities that can help this process.

Live-stream the funeral

Many crematoriums may have the ability to live stream funeral services, so mourners that cannot physically be there on the day still get to pay their final respects.

If this is not possible, there are also many video

call apps available that could be used to help as many people as possible to virtually attend the funeral.

Helping those you care for pay their respects in this way can allow them to still feel like a part of the day without having to be there physically. If you have a large enough room in the care home you may be able to facilitate a socially distant ceremony where residents can come together and watch the live stream, alternatively this could be a one-to-one activity in a person's room. It is a good idea to make sure you spend time together after the live stream has ended to give the resident a chance to chat or express how they are feeling over a cup of tea or glass of sherry.

Hold an online ceremony

If live-streaming the funeral does not feel appropriate, or if the person is having an unattended service, then an online ceremony could be the right option. An online ceremony is where family, friends and care home staff can come together over a video conference call to celebrate the life of the loved one and they can have the option to be guided through this by a funeral celebrant, to take off the pressure. The celebrant will be able to help put together the service along with readings and music that were important to them, and will lead the ceremony, much like they would in a traditional funeral.

Hold a small ceremonial activity or series of small activities in the Care Home. This can include a combination of the following:

Read out messages from friends and family

During a funeral, a eulogy is usually read out for everyone in attendance to hear. Eulogies are speeches that help everyone remember their loved one and can include stories of the person's life and people who were important to them. Because of restrictions on how many people can attend a funeral, the eulogy could be used as a way to bring people together by asking those that can't attend to leave a message or story to be read out. So rather than one eulogy, there could be many more, giving those in attendance more support and love from absent family and friends. These messages could then be kept together and turned into a book of remembrance to be shared later, or even shared on social media. The Activity Team may wish to have an in-house ceremony that acknowledges the person's contribution to the life of the home and enables fellow residents and staff to share their memories and say goodbye.

Coffin keepsakes

The idea of putting items inside coffins is not a new one, with many people requesting to have items such as photographs and jewellery placed into their coffin with them. So, when people are unable to physically attend a funeral, they could still say their goodbyes by giving something to be placed in the coffin. The possibilities are endless, but this could be letters, photographs, handprints, or even something that had special meaning between them or yourself, and the person who has died. The Activity Team may wish to ask staff and fellow residents to contribute to a display within the home that celebrates the person's life and contribution to the life of the home.

Light a candle or play a favourite song

For most people, a funeral is a necessary part of the grieving process, and so understandably it will be very upsetting for those who cannot attend. It may help those who cannot be at the funeral to feel as if they are part of the service in some way. Maybe you could ask them to light a candle at a certain time of the day, or when the funeral is taking place. Alternatively, you could ask them to play a favourite song. The Activity Team may speak with the person's family in order to coordinate a similar activity or ritual to take place at this time in the care home.

Share the order of service

In some cases it could be possible for the order of service to be shared with family and friends via email. This could then be read at the time of the service, helping everyone to be a part of the funeral. The Activity Team could ask the family to extend this to the care homes so that staff and residents can look at the pictures, music and readings that were chosen or read them out as part of their own farewell activity.

Connect on social media

On the day of the funeral, you could ask family and friends if it would be okay for the people who cannot be at the funeral to post something special on social media in their memory. You could suggest to them for everyone to take photos wearing a favourite colour or something else that would have special meaning. Using social media to say someone has died is becoming increasingly popular, but many still feel it can be inappropriate, especially without the family's permission. By asking friends and family to come together this way, they are giving permission to celebrate a life on social media and helping them to come together when they cannot physically be together at the funeral.

Once the restrictions have been lifted – Plan to have a memorial service

Some of the tips above might not be for you or suitable for those affected, and that is okay. Or even if you do one or more of them you may still feel like you need the traditional goodbye. Funerals and funeral services are an important part of the grieving process and so, while it won't be what you originally planned, you could plan to have a memorial service once the restrictions on social distancing have been lifted.

If you would like to discuss any of these ideas or have any ideas of your own for a special person's funeral, please speak with your local Co-op funeral home who will be happy to help guide you through.

Bereavement Support

Helping those around us cope with a loss as well as coping with this personally, has admittedly become more challenging under these circumstances. Following the loss of someone you have cared for, a colleague, partner, family member or friend, you may feel a range of emotions or you may feel nothing – please understand that this is normal. A lot of people are confused by some of the emotions they feel, which may initially include anger, shock, guilt and pain; changing over time to longing, loneliness and sadness. There isn't a right or wrong way to grieve, and everyone's experience is different. There's no way of knowing how it'll affect you, but there are a number of things you can do to help support and guide you through this difficult time.

Some helpful tips to try:

- Get enough sleep – establish a relaxation routine to help you prepare for sleep
- Eat well – regular healthy meals can make a big difference to your sense of wellbeing
- Avoid drugs and alcohol – these tend to make it more difficult in the long term
- Be active – take a stroll in the fresh air and keep energy levels up



Supporting loss and saying goodbye

Provided by St Christopher's Hospice

This information sheet has been developed by St Christopher's Hospice to help support care homes during the Covid-19 pandemic. It is general advice only and a person-centred approach should always be sought.

This year, during the Covid-19 outbreak, we've probably all thought a lot more about death, dying and loss than we would normally. Speaking those thoughts out loud isn't always easy, as we don't want to upset people or sound gloomy. But, if you can have that chat with family and friends, it can make things much easier in the long run for everyone. In fact, families often report that it comes as a relief once these subjects are brought out into the open.

Grief is a topic that many of us might feel uncomfortable talking about, or simply feel that we 'don't know what to say'. There is no right or wrong way to grieve, and all our experiences are unique. Of course, in the current situation, not being present when a friend or relative dies, perhaps not having the opportunity to say 'goodbye', or not being able to attend a funeral or memorial service, can make grief more complicated to navigate. Saying goodbye matters, and we hope that the tips below may be useful to you at this current time.

Different ways to say 'goodbye'

- **Making sense of death:** It is very difficult to make sense of a death, sudden or expected. We are unable to make meaning of it for some time. We need to find ways, in place of the previously recognised opportunities, to gather and remember in the days after a death.
- **Important Rituals:** What rituals have been traditional in your family around a funeral or afterwards? Think how you might use these at home. Are there prayers, poems, prose or music that have a particular resonance and importance to you, or to the person who has died?
- **Remote attendance:** For the funeral, ask if it is possible to live-stream the event so that family and friends can join remotely.
- **Future events:** Plan an event in the future when you can gather as a family with friends. What would be appropriate? Maybe sharing stories, planning a eulogy or tribute, or creating a photo montage.
- **Time for reflection:** Take time to remember alone. If lighting a candle or writing your memories helps with the remembering, these are good ways to hold the person who has died in your thoughts.

For more support you could visit <https://www.cruse.org.uk/coronavirus/funerals>

Remembering someone who has died

"We can seek ways through remembrance, spiritual practice, or religious ritual to face the death of a relative or friend – even if we are socially isolated right now. Then we can look towards ways, when this outbreak ends (which it will), to memorialise those that have died and find opportunities to grieve together," says Andrew Goodhead, our Patient and Family Services deputy manager. Here are a few suggestions to help remember those who have died:

- **The importance of saying goodbye:** Not being present when a relative dies, having the opportunity to say 'goodbye' or being unable to attend a funeral or memorial service can make grief more complicated to navigate. Saying goodbye matters. Each person must find their own ways to seek, create and take memories which allow the person who has died to remain present in the life of the bereaved even though physically absent
- **Honouring the person:** Sharing stories and memories of the person who has died, either by writing a journal, or a joint phone call, or writing memories down helps to keep the person 'alive' in our thoughts.
- **Memorialise:** Find a time in the year when the social situation changes when you can gather together to memorialise. In this, tell your memories, share pictures, allow yourselves to feel the sadness of the occasion as well as the happier memories you have.
- **Social Media:** It is possible to create memorial pages on social media sites. These can be accessed by several people who have permission from the page 'owner.'
- **Digital pages:** Consider adding memorial pages to your website for those who would like to develop their own away from social media. These allow memories to be written, photos to be added, and 'virtual candles' to be lit.
- **Special Dates:** The date of a death, a birthday or important anniversary can become occasions when the person who has died is remembered.
- **Continuing bonds:** Bereavement does not end, it is lived with, and men and women remain bereaved. Enabling personal and shared opportunities to remember and memorialise recognises that we have continuing bonds with the deceased person.

Supporting people in their loss

Do you feel tongue-tied when you speak to someone who is grieving? We can all feel at a loss for words, when faced with someone's grief. These five tips might make you feel better prepared:

- **Acknowledge the loss:** It's better to do something than nothing – to acknowledge loss rather than ignore it
- **Encourage conversation:** Look for invitations to talk from the other person. If they start talking about the person who has died, encourage them, even if it seems to make them upset
- **Be open:** Be comforting when opening up the conversation, rather than business-like
- **Be flexible:** Try and create an environment where the person has the freedom to talk or not talk, according to what they want. "I'm around all day if you fancy a chat..."
- **No expectations:** Grief has its own pace and time so it will be different for each one of us. There should be no expectation on a bereaved person, for instance, that they need to cry – or stop crying – they will find a way through this that's best for them

Further support can be found at
<https://www.thegoodgrieftrust.org/>

Supporting people living with dementia in care homes to respond to loss and grief

Provided by The Association of Dementia Studies at the University of Worcester

This information sheet has been developed by the Association for Dementia Studies at the University of Worcester (www.worc.ac.uk/dementia) to help support care homes during the Covid-19 pandemic. It is general advice only and a person-centred approach should always be sought.

The Covid-19 pandemic has presented care homes with very challenging circumstances including unanticipated deaths and multiple losses of residents. Both residents and staff will need time, compassion and support to respond to their grief. This guidance sheet is designed to help staff and families support residents living with dementia, as their cognitive difficulties may affect the ways they express and process grief and uncertainty.

- **Making Assumptions:** Do not assume that a person living with dementia is not aware of the changes and losses that have occurred. People often take-in more than we think. For example, they may well notice that the person they usually sit next to is no longer around.
- **The process of grieving:** Remember that grief is a natural process that we all experience when loss happens. This is no different for a person living with dementia, but they may find it difficult to express their feelings in a straight-forward way or understand why this has happened.
- **Providing comfort:** It can be tempting to distract a person when they are experiencing negative emotions like sadness or anxiety. However, feeling negative emotions is normal human experience and providing comfort and reassurance will often be more helpful in the long term.
- **Providing Information:** Make sure that you gently offer people ways to engage with any memorial you have in the home by explaining simply what is happening and why (e.g. "In this book we have pictures of residents who have died. I look at it when I am missing someone"). You should then be led by the person's own verbal and non-verbal communication to see whether they wish to explore further. Do not force anyone to engage, but also do not assume that they will not want to.
- **Routines and Rituals:** If you can, speak to people who know the person well to find out how they would have previously dealt with grief and loss. There may be specific beliefs, rituals, objects or phrases that are familiar to the person that will help them understand and be involved. In particular, any religious faith (and associated rituals) is likely to be especially important during times of grief.
- **Terminology:** Be thoughtful about the words you use as some common phrases associated with death can cause extra confusion (e.g. 'passed away', 'gone to heaven'). There is no right or wrong here, but it's about being mindful of the words or phrases the person is familiar with.
- **Approach:** Remember that present events can trigger past memories for people living with dementia, and so as well as noticing that something is different now, they may also be re-experiencing previous losses in their lives. Provide physical and emotional comfort for a person when they're showing signs of upset or anxiety (whether in their words or behaviour), even if you are not sure why.

Loss and Grief in the Care Home

Provided by Danuta Lipinska

Caring for frail older people or even younger people with life-limiting conditions or mental health concerns and physical disabilities or dementia, you will not be a stranger to the ongoing nature of dying and death, loss, grief and mourning. Care staff often say to me "Well, it's just part of the job. We do the best we can, and we usually don't let it get to us too much."

But this is not just the job as usual.

So why is it different this time?

- **Trauma:** The nature of this pandemic brings us into the realm of Traumatic Loss, meaning that there is a deeply disturbing threat of actual or possible harm directly towards you, your loved ones, those you care for at work and the citizens of the world at large.
- **Fear:** Feeling frightened and anxious are natural human responses to trauma and the threat of trauma. Fear of breaking down and losing control are also common.
- **Competence:** Caring for residents with the illness, wondering when the next person will become unwell and supporting their death and dying, knowing that what we have done has not been enough in this case brings feelings of inadequacy, guilt, hopelessness and helplessness, great sadness and anger.

The loss of how things used to be?

- **Illness and death:** Many more of the women and men who are residents in the care home are becoming unwell. Some are going to hospital and not coming back, and some are dying in the home. You wonder if their death could have been prevented. You may not have had the chance to say goodbye to a person you have come to care deeply about over many years
- **Being with the person:** Relatives, partners, children and grandchildren are not able to be with them as their illness progresses and their dying and death takes place.
- **Multiple loss:** You are responding to multiple losses – many losses at once. At work, at home, in your families, in the community, the country and the world. You have had to take on the management of the multiple changes within the care home that would not normally be occurring. Even if you have had a quarantine event that required the home to shut down and relatives could not visit, you would have had an ending in sight when things could return to normal. At the moment we don't know when the end might be.
- **Vulnerability:** Our basic needs for security and safety have been threatened. For some people, food and shelter, jobs and finances are affected. For many, their sense of wellbeing and ability to cope have been challenged and they are not themselves. We were unable to prepare for this and this can leave us feeling de-skilled and vulnerable.

What are Loss and bereavement?

Loss (or bereavement) is what happens as a result of the changes in our lives or the actual death of a person or pet. Loss is the event that happens when we are rowing along the River of Life in our canoe and suddenly, we are thrown over the edge into a waterfall and the swirling whirlpool below. Along the way, over by the rocks, there is a calm deep pool. We could end up in either or both of these places. The losses associated with the Covid-19 pandemic arouse our basic responses to threat – our needs for self-protection and survival kick in and we respond in very basic human and instinctive ways (our 'gut response'). Fight, Flight, Freeze or Follow.

Grief is what we feel and this can be a 'whirlpool' of many emotions all churned up and colliding over one another, or a quiet still pool where feeling numb and non-reactive is just another way of being with the loss. It is a process of stages that can come and go, co-exist and last for as long as we need them to. There are many ways people have written about grief. Possibly the most recognisable is the Five Stages of Grief described by Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross in 1969. They are Denial, Anger, Depression, Bargaining and Acceptance.

It is important to remember that we all grieve in our own unique way, and these are just guidelines that might help to make sense of your experience. If it doesn't that's fine. Something and somebody else will be there to help you, if you ask. When you are ready. That might be tomorrow, it might not be for a long time.

At this particular time, it seems to me that there are a few kinds of grief that we are experiencing within this pandemic.

- Global grief
- My grief
- Your grief
- What if...grief, or 'Anticipatory grief'. Our real worry and concern about what might happen in the future. It can feel as real as if it is happening NOW.



A Whirlpool of Feelings

You might be feeling ANY or ALL of these – sad, angry, annoyed with others, numb, hopeless, argumentative, in despair, swearing, 'not myself', shutting others out, sleeping more than usual, not sleeping, not eating, comfort eating, guilty (I am safe, others are not; can I be doing more? Why am I at home when I should be with my colleagues?), crying, frightened, alone, lost, ignored, suicidal, wanting to harm yourself, confusion, panic, anxiety, disbelief, astonished by kindness, hopeful.

These and more feelings are natural in these difficult and uncertain times.

You might be by yourself at this moment, and you may be feeling alone, even in the midst of a busy care home.

Mourning is what we do to acknowledge the pain and the loss and offer a ritual, a tradition, a faith or spirituality-based activity which focuses on the loss.

What can we do about it?

Stop to consider, take a deep breath and perhaps share your feelings with a co-worker or manager, and when you get home, with a trusted partner, friend or family member, your faith leader, counsellor, or call a Helpline. Staff are there to listen to your concerns and are not only there for suicidal feelings.

Talk and Listen to one another, even if not in the same room or close enough to touch or hug. You don't have to do this by yourself, even though you may physically be alone.

Find a friend at the care home, or your manager. "I need a minute please" is a good place to start. Often your work colleague will know exactly what you might be thinking or feeling, as they share the same experiences as you. They might just be feeling or seeing it differently to you and that can be helpful for both of you.

If you are feeling overwhelmed, suicidal, in danger of self-harm, or your usual coping strategies are not working and you may be drinking or using more drugs than usual, call Samaritans HELP LINE 116 123 or Cruse Bereavement Support 0808 808 1677 or your local Community Mental Health Team.

Take a Break from the routine, take 5 minutes and go to the staff room, step outside, let a colleague or your manager know you need to take time out. Many managers have relaxed the usual routine of working to allow for more breaks on a long shift.

Breathe Taking some deep breaths really can help clear the stress, anxiety, the 'fog' in our minds, bringing more oxygen into our bodies and brains which is really helpful for shifting our thoughts and worries. It also helps bring new energy to tired muscles and organs.

Have a Drink of water now – until you can make your favourite warm drink or soft drink. Staying hydrated helps brain function – the place from where all the thoughts, feelings and behaviour are controlled.

Have a Snack Pizza and cakes, chocolate, fruit, raw vegetables with dips and healthy chips, nuts, drinks and goodies keep spirits up in the staff room.

Ending The Shift Write down 3 things you feel good about today. It can be very simple. "I gave Barry a great shave", "Marion really enjoyed her strawberry ice cream", "I helped Amy talk to her Dad on the iPad."

Write down the names of anyone you are especially concerned about and add a kind word next to their name.

Add the thought "I have done the best that I could do today. Well done." Leave the piece of paper in an envelope in your locker. Close the door and leave it there. Now you are ready to leave your workplace and move to the next. You do not have to open the envelope when you come back tomorrow.

Remembering together Many care homes are gathering residents and staff together once a week to sit together, light a candle, and talk about the person who has died, playing their favourite piece of music, having their favourite dessert, baking a cake together for tea time or watching his/her favourite film with ice cream cones.

Everyone is encouraged to share a word, a brief thought or memory aloud.

A Memory Tree Add photos of the person who has died and thoughts from anyone in the home about them written on the 'leaves' and hung from the branches of the tree. This can be a small tree with fairy lights inside the branches or painted onto a wall or a cut out of a tree tacked onto the notice board. You can be as creative as you like with the above process of community remembrance as it aids our grief and mourning process and acknowledges our shared experience of loss. Care home staff have said how helpful this can be, and the residents feel part of what is happening too. It is also essential to their wellbeing.

Remind yourself that you are doing the very best you can in the situation.

We think that you are doing a tremendous job and one that is often unseen and unheard. You are caring for the most frail, unwell, and vulnerable people in our families and communities. You are providing caring and skilled accompaniment for women and men at the end of their lives.

You are 'standing in' for loved ones, families, friends and faith leaders who are unable to be there. What an important role this is, giving comfort to so many family members who cannot be there with their loved ones.

Thank you

Dr Elisabeth Kubler-Ross The Stages of Grief 1969

Acknowledgement of the death of a resident: Example of a short, non-religious, memorial ceremony

Provided by Meg Bond, Humanist Celebrant

1. Non-religious: it's best to keep it neutral as far as spiritual beliefs go, because the person may not have been really religious, even if they put down a particular religion on their paperwork. And staff attending may have a range of different beliefs, or none, and feel imposed upon if one particular belief system is pushed on them in their workplace. If you want to give space for prayer, just call it "a minute's silence" then people can choose to pray or not.

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2. Characterful: gently fit the ceremony to the personality of the person who died. (Beware of going too far: it could sound like mockery.)

Find a short poem or reading

Consider what interests or characteristics the person had. If you didn't really get the chance to know their true personality, ask the family about their past.

Look up poems, song lyrics or funeral readings on the internet to match. There are plenty of non-religious sites, especially those with 'humanist' in the title. Unless the poem is short, select extracts. You can adapt the words to fit the person.

Some examples:

A poem for a person who liked to sing. (Or 'laugh' or 'dance' or 'have a drink')

If I should go before the rest of you by Joyce Grenfell

If I should go before the rest of you,
Break not a flower, nor inscribe a stone,
Nor, when I'm gone, speak in a Sunday voice,
But be the usual self that I have known.
Weep if you must:
Parting is hell,
But life goes on
So sing as well. (or replace 'sing' with 'laugh' or
'dance' or 'have a drink')

A poem for someone who loved a cup of tea.

A Long Cup of Tea adapted from a poem by Michael Ashby

"Death" is too negative a word for me.
So I'm popping off for a "long cup of tea"
Not lapsang suchong or earl grey
Or that stuff with bergamot
Just use the biggest mug you've got
And stick with my favourite friend
You know, the English breakfast blend
So, mother, put the kettle on for me
It's time, mother, for my "long cup of tea"
(or replace 'English Breakfast' with 'Builder's' or
'Typhoo' or whatever their favourite tea was)

A poem for a train driver:

'Will The Lights be Green?
– extract from a poem by Cy Warman

Oft, when I feel my engine swerve,
Over strange rails we fare,
I strain my eyes around the curve
For what awaits us there.
When swift and free she carries me
Through night-dark yards unseen,
I look along the line to see
That all the lights are green.

The coloured lights all signify:
The yellow light signs slow;
The red light is a danger light,
The green light, "Let her go."
Towards life's terminus I trend,
Tonight's run's brief it seems;

Who knows what's at the end –
But I know the lights are green.

A poem for a motorcyclist

'Biker Poem' – extract from a poem by an anonymous biker

I soar away into speed's breeze,
the engine's power between my knees.
The throttle trembles in my hand
at my control, at my command!
In the droning rumble of the motor's sound
my problems, troubles and cares are drowned.
Nothing keeps me from the sky,
and I can ride where eagles fly!
Don't call me back to earth again
where I must walk like other men.
All is quiet now, the rush has gone
I've never travelled this far
The sun is bright and there's a cool breeze
I wouldn't mind if this ride would last forever

A reading for a person who was an intellectual, interested in philosophy or science.

A quotation from Seneca the Younger, Roman philosopher & playwright. Born 6 BC, died 65 AD

"The time will come when diligent research over long periods will bring to light things which now lie hidden. A single lifetime, even though entirely devoted to the sky, would not be enough for the investigation of so vast a subject... And so this knowledge will be unfolded only through long successive ages. There will come a time when our descendants will be amazed that we did not know things that are so plain to them... Many discoveries are reserved for ages still to come, when memory of us will have been effaced."

Showing Respect After Death - The Hallmark Farewell Example of Recognition

Provided by Hallmark Care

To mark the passing of a resident a discretion table is placed in the reception area of each home near the entrance. This mark of respect should not be on the reception desk but on a small table:

The following should be placed on the table

- A freshly pressed, clean tablecloth
- A framed picture of the resident
- The name of the resident
- Fresh flowers

Butterfly Indicators

A Butterfly Indicator is a quick and effective way to inform team members and other visitors that someone in a room has died. It is an immediate action that offers notification to the team in the event of a death and it alerts team members from all departments working in the area. Utilising a Butterfly Indicator is a method of communicating a resident's death to team volunteers, residents and family members. Consider the following techniques in your home:

- Placing a butterfly on the door of a deceased resident can prepare team members and volunteers prior to entering the room
- Placing a butterfly at the place setting in the dining room of a resident who has died communicates a resident's death to other residents and families
- Make sure the butterfly is large enough to catch the attention of team members, residents, families, and volunteers



#StarsInMemory : Connected by Care, United by Loss

A collaborative and commemorative event, by Dr Amanda Taylor-Beswick – Queens University Belfast and Dr Denise Turner – London Metropolitan University

In April 2020, shortly after the UK went into lockdown, we were honoured to be invited by Sean Holland, the Chief Social Worker for Northern Ireland, to write a blog which acknowledged the ways in which the effects of Covid-19 were impacting on the people of Northern Ireland. The published blog, written as a response to Sean's invitation, recognised the unparalleled death toll during Covid-19, as well as the effects of social distancing on the rituals and processes which traditionally follow the loss of a loved one. The blog can be found here: <https://www.scie.org.uk/care-providers/coronavirus-covid-19/blogs/covid-death-rituals>

Social distancing and the lockdown led to restrictions on people visiting dying loved ones in care homes resulting in little or no time to say an important final farewell, or even to process the sudden and unexpected death of someone who, only weeks before, may have been physically fit and healthy.

As the immediate impacts of the Covid-19 wave begin to subside, there is a gradual move to 'return to normal'. However, with over 45,000 confirmed deaths, there will be many people for whom that 'normal' is no longer possible, as they continue to grieve the deaths of loved ones alongside, in many cases, the loss of the opportunity to say goodbye. Grief and its consequences are largely invisible to others and yet the immediate and long-term impacts on emotional health and social networks are well documented. In Kenneth Doka's work on grief (1989) he argues that grief disenfranchises us, whilst other contemporary grief theorists including Neimeyer (2001) suggest that meaning making is one of the key ways in which people come to terms with grief and loss. This has been seen throughout the Covid-19 outbreak, from 'clap for the carers' to the 'thank you NHS' rainbows, but to date there has been little collective recognition that aims to bring bereaved people together in a shared show of grief, akin to the clapping ritual.



Following publication of the blog we invited comments from the people of Northern Ireland and received some personal stories, as well as interesting discussion on the ways in which English death rituals and euphemisms like 'lost' were perceived to be infiltrating Northern Irish culture, as a result of Covid-19.

Since publication of the blog, as the daily death toll continued to rise, care homes found themselves at the centre of political and media debate, with the highly contagious nature of Covid-19 raging through the sector.



Inspired by a collaboration with the Care sector, we chose 31 June as #StarsInMemory Day. Over thirty Care organisations joined together in an act of collective meaning making, relieving the 'disenfranchisement' that many bereaved people may feel, by making grief visible. The theme for the day drew from a legend attributed to the Inuits:

"Perhaps they are not stars, but rather openings in heaven where the love of our lost ones pours through and shines down upon us to let us know they are happy."

On 30th June #StarsInMemory lit up social media as people who wanted to join in on this collective idea, put their star up in their window, or on show, as a public and unified display of grief and loss. Doorways and corridors full of stars and even dancing videos were shared by hundreds of contributors on social media, with the event also shared in the specialist media and mainstream media: <https://bit.ly/3j3H9Bm>

This shared show of the losses encountered during Covid-19 is one way in which the pandemic presents us with an opportunity to highlight the work of care homes and to learn from each other in the sharing of grief. We hope that the idea will spread light and ignite other collective sharing rituals in the future.

Resources:

Whether you're concerned about yourself or a loved one, these helplines and support groups can offer expert advice.

Alzheimer's Society

Provides information on dementia, including factsheets and helplines.

Phone: **0333 150 3456** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm and 10am to 4pm on weekends)

Website: **www.alzheimers.org.uk**

Anxiety UK

Charity providing support if you have been diagnosed with an anxiety condition.

Phone: **03444 775 774** (Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 10pm; Saturday to Sunday, 10am to 8pm)

Website: **www.anxietyuk.org.uk**

Bipolar UK

A charity helping people living with manic depression or bipolar disorder.

Website: **www.bipolaruk.org.uk**

CALM

CALM is the Campaign Against Living Miserably, for men aged 15 to 35.

Phone: **0800 58 58 58** (daily, 5pm to midnight)

Website: **www.thecalmzone.net**

Cruse Bereavement Care

Phone: **0808 808 1677** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)

Website: **www.cruse.org.uk**

Dementia UK

Dementia UK provides specialist dementia support for families through our Admiral Nurse service.

Admiral Nurse Helpline:

helpline@dementiauk.org

Phone: **0800 888 6678**

Website: **www.dementiauk.org**

Men's Health Forum

24/7 stress support for men by text, chat and email.

Website: **www.menshealthforum.org.uk**

Mental Health Foundation

Provides information and support for anyone with mental health problems or learning disabilities.

Website: **www.mentalhealth.org.uk**

Mind

Promotes the views and needs of people with mental health problems.

Phone: **0300 123 3393** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm)

Website: **www.mind.org.uk**

NAPA (National Activity Providers Association)

Information and support in regard to the wellbeing and engagement of people with care and support needs

Phone: NAPA Helpline: **0800 158 5503** (Monday to Thursday, 7.30 to 4pm)

Email: **helpline@napa-activities.co.uk**

Website: **www.napa-activities.co.uk**

No Panic

Voluntary charity offering support for sufferers of panic attacks and obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD). Offers a course to help overcome your phobia or OCD.

Phone: **0844 967 4848** (daily, 10am to 10pm).

Calls cost 5p per minute plus your phone provider's Access Charge

Website: **www.nopanic.org.uk**

NSPCC

Children's charity dedicated to ending child abuse and child cruelty.

Phone: **0800 1111** for Childline for children (24-hour helpline)

0808 800 5000 for adults concerned about a child (24-hour helpline)

Website: **www.nspcc.org.uk**

OCD Action

Support for people with OCD. Includes information on treatment and online resources.

Phone: **0845 390 6232** (Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 5pm). Calls cost 5p per minute plus your phone provider's Access Charge

Website: **www.ocdaction.org.uk**

OCD UK

A charity run by people with OCD, for people with OCD. Includes facts, news and treatments.

Phone: **0333 212 7890** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)

Website: **www.ocduk.org**

PAPYRUS

Young suicide prevention society.

Phone: HOPELINEUK **0800 068 4141** (Monday to Friday, 10am to 10pm, and 2pm to 10pm on weekends and bank holidays)

Website: **www.papyrus-uk.org**

Refuge

Advice on dealing with domestic violence.

Phone: **0808 2000 247** (24-hour helpline)

Website: **www.refuge.org.uk**

Abuse (child, sexual, domestic violence)

Addiction (drugs, alcohol, gambling)

Alcoholics

Alzheimer's

Rethink Mental Illness

Support and advice for people living with mental illness.

Phone: **0300 5000 927** (Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 4pm)

Website: **www.rethink.org**

Samaritans

Confidential support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair.

Phone: **116 123** (free 24-hour helpline)

Website: **www.samaritans.org.uk**

SANE

Emotional support, information and guidance for people affected by mental illness, their families and carers.

SANEline: **0300 304 7000** (daily, 4.30pm to 10.30pm)

Textcare: comfort and care via text message, sent when the person needs it most: www.sane.org.uk/textcare

Peer support forum: **www.sane.org.uk/supportforum**

Website: **www.sane.org.uk/support**

YoungMinds

Information on child and adolescent mental health. Services for parents and professionals.

Phone: Parents' helpline **0808 802 5544** (Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 4pm)

Website: **www.youngminds.org.uk**

For more information about NAPA,
visit our website: **www.napa-activities.co.uk**
Call the NAPA Helpline: **0800 158 553**

For more information on our services at Co-op Funeralcare,
visit our website, **coop.co.uk/funeralcare**



It's what we do

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