

Dear Family and Friends,

It is with heavy hearts, that we are writing to inform you that our annual butterfly memorial service, “Wings of Memories”, is being postponed until next year due to Covid-19. You and your loved ones have touched our lives and we look forward to this memorial service each year. It is a special time to re-connect with the families we have served and pay tribute to your loved ones. We will look forward to honoring your loved one during our 2021 “Wings of Memories” memorial service and will send you information about this event as we near that time.

Although we cannot be together to share this special time in 2020, we wanted to provide you with some ritual ideas that you can do on your own to honor your loved one. Rituals are symbolic activities that can help us as we heal and mourn. We hope that you find these meaningful on your grief journey. See the following pages for these suggestions. “When words are inadequate, have a ritual.”-Alan Wolfelt

Whatever ritual you choose, remember that it doesn’t have to be perfect. In your time of grief, honoring and remembering is not a one-time event. It is something that you can do many times, in many ways as life moves forward.

We also want to take this opportunity to remind you that although we cannot hold events or meet in groups at this time, we are still available to support and guide you in a variety of ways. Our bereavement staff is available to provide 1:1 grief support in person, via telephone, or virtually. We also offer a lending library of books and resources regarding grief and loss. If you are interested in receiving any literature from our library or to learn more about support available, please contact the bereavement coordinator- Sara Wade, LMSW with any questions at sara@essencehospice.com or (319) 622-3195.

You and your family will remain in our thoughts during these challenging times. Wishing you peaceful moments, gentle thoughts, and happy memories as you honor your loved one.

Sincerely,
The Essence of Life Hospice Team



Writing a Letter to Your Loved One

Many people have found that writing letters to deceased loved ones can be a helpful activity for healing. In grief it is important to express and externalize our emotions. Feelings can get trapped in our bodies as our mind cycles through the same story or thoughts, over and over again. Writing a letter is a powerful way to externalize these thoughts and reconnect with a loved one after he or she has died.



Tips for writing a letter to your loved one:

1. Find yourself a quiet place where you are comfortable. Choose your preferred medium, notebook, journal, iPad, smartphone, or even the back side of recycled piece of paper.
2. Release all judgment. There is no right way or wrong way to write about your emotions.
3. Tell the person whatever you felt you could not say before, whether it's profound, or simply: *I love you*. Or the hardest of all: *I'm sorry*.
4. Write about any questions that have been on your mind.
5. Write about:
 - Experiences you have been through since your loved one's death
 - A favorite memory of your loved one
 - How you're coping, what makes you laugh and cry now
 - The ways you continue to honor their memory
 - Anything you miss or regret since they died
 - Issues in your relationship that remain unresolved
 - Your moments of appreciation
 - New revelations about yourself or your loved one
 - Close with any personal message you would like to include

*Children may participate in this ritual as well by drawing pictures or writing a letter about their favorite memories with their loved ones, what they miss most, and things they want to say to their loved one.

After you've written the letter, consider any of the following options:

- Seal it in an envelope and keep it somewhere private
- Save it somewhere on your computer, perhaps in a file with some special photos
- Keep it close to you in your wallet, beside table, or if you've created an altar
- Share it with someone close to you
- Read it out loud to your loved one (at their grave site, to a photograph, in nature, etc)
- If you do not want to keep it, destroying it may be therapeutic as well.





Create a Memory Garden or Plant a Tree

This option can be a thoughtful tribute to your loved one. Nature can serve as a quiet, reflective place where you can go to be comforted and inspired. Options include planting a tree, a bush, flowers, or creating a memorial garden with plantings, plaques, a bench, etc. A memory garden can enrich your life by allowing you to have somewhere to feel at peace as you remember your loved one's life. The flowers, bush or tree can be a symbolic, physical presence that helps represent the person who died.



*Children can assist with these plantings and also in creating decorations for this special spot. Children could paint rocks or create a sign with messages to their loved one.

In Memory of...

A few more ideas to honor your loved one

- Send off balloons or sky lanterns
 - Set a place at the table for your loved one during a special meal
 - Make your loved one's favorite meal or dessert
 - Tell stories of the person; share with others via phone, letters, or virtually
 - Sing, or listen to a favorite song of the deceased
 - Visit a special place that holds memories of your loved one
 - Say a special prayer
 - Make a quilt or pillow with the clothing of your loved one
 - Create a memory book with photos or written memories
 - Donate to a special cause in honor of your loved one
- **Set aside the anniversary of the death as a day to honor your loved one**
As mourners, we usually don't look forward to the anniversary of the death. We often feel particularly sad and helpless on this day. But if we turn the anniversary day into a ritual, we give ourselves something meaningful and healing to do when ordinary words and going about our day-to-day routines are inadequate.
Ideas for this day; visit the final resting place or a place that was special to your loved one. Or plan a ritual activity, such as going on a hike, hosting a family dinner, volunteering for an important cause, or whatever seems most fitting.



Candle Lighting Ceremony

The act of lighting a candle in honor of those who have passed is a centuries old tradition that allows us to express what we cannot communicate with words. By lighting a candle for our loved ones, we remember and honor their life and their memory. You can light a single candle or if you have access to four candles, you may follow the candle lighting ceremony suggestion below.

For this ceremony, you may choose to set up an altar in your home. To do this, find a quiet spot, place a picture of your loved one and adorn the area with candles, flowers, and favorite objects of the deceased. If you have children in the family, they could draw pictures or write notes to include on the altar. You may choose to play meaningful music during this time, read a poem, or silently reflect. You can do this ritual every day at a specific time, choose a day once a week, on special dates/holidays, or whenever you feel comforted in doing so.

This is a special candle lighting ceremony to remember those we have lost and to honor our grief.

- *“As we light these four candles; We light one for our grief, one for our courage, one for our memories and one for our love.”*
- **LIGHT FIRST CANDLE**
- *“The light of this first candle represents our grief. The pain of our loss is intense, but it reminds us of the depth of our love.*
- **LIGHT SECOND CANDLE**
- *“The light of this second candle represents our courage to confront our sorrow; to comfort each other; to change our lives.”*
- **LIGHT THIRD CANDLE**
- *“This third candle we light in your memory. To the times we laughed, the times we cried, the times we were angry with each other, the fun things we did, the caring and the joy you gave us.”*
- **LIGHT FOURTH CANDLE**
- *“This fourth candle is the light of our love. We cherish the special place in our hearts that will always be reserved for those we have lost. We thank you for the gift your living brought to us. We love you. We remember you.”*

“Light A Candle”

By Paul Alexander

*And I will light a candle for you
To shatter all the darkness and bless the times we knew
Like a beacon in the night
The flame will burn bright and guide us on our way
Oh, today I light a candle for you*

*The seasons come and go, and I'm weary from the change
I keep moving on, you know it's not the same
And when I'm walking all alone
Do you hear me call your name?
Do you hear me sing the songs we used to sing?*

*You filled my life with wonder, touched me with surprise
Always saw that something special deep within your eyes
And through the good times and the bad
We carried on with pride
I hold on to the love and life we knew*



Prayer in Time of Bereavement – Author Unknown

Lord, you are close to the broken-hearted

Be with me now in my grief and loneliness.

Give me courage to face loss and not to grieve in silence.

Be with me as I struggle with many different and painful feelings.

Ease the hurt in my heart. Encircle me in your love.

Help me to believe that one day I will no longer have this deep sorrow.

May I find comfort in sharing my grief with those who understand the strong bonds of love.

Stay with me, Lord, support me.

Help me to know that your power is at work within me as I deal with my grief.

An Affirmation for Those Who Have Lost - James E. Miller

I believe there is no denying it: it hurts to lose. It hurts to lose a cherished relationship with another, Or a significant part of one's own self. It can hurt to lose that which has united one with the past Or that which has beckoned one into the future. It is painful to feel diminished or abandoned, To be left behind or left alone. Yet I believe there is more to losing than just the hurt and the pain. For there are other experiences that loss can call forth. I believe that courage often appears, However quietly it is expressed, However easily it goes unnoticed by others: The courage to be strong enough to surrender, The fortitude to be firm enough to be flexible. I believe a time of loss can be a time of learning unlike any other, And that it can teach some of life's most valuable lessons.

In the act of losing there is something to be found. In the act of letting go, there is something to be grasped. In the act of saying "goodbye", there is a "hello" to be heard. For I believe living with loss is about beginnings as well as endings. And grieving is a matter of life more than death. And growing is a matter of mind and heart and soul more than of body. And loving is a matter of eternity more than of time. Finally, I believe in the promising paradoxes of loss.

In the midst of darkness, there can come great Light. At the bottom of despair, there can appear a great Hope. And deep within loneliness, there can dwell a great Love. I believe these things because others have shown the way – Others who have lost and have then grown through their losing, Others who have suffered and then found new meaning. So I know I am not alone: I am accompanied, day after night, night after day.

Walk Within You~ Taken from Nicholas Evans' book, The Smoke Jumper

If I be the first of us to die,
Let grief not blacken long your sky.
Be bold but modest in your grieving,
There is a change but not a leaving.
For just as death is part of life,
The dead live on forever in the living.
And all the gathered riches of our journey,
The moments shared, the mysteries explored,
The steady layering of intimacy stored,
The things that made us laugh or weep or sing,
The joy of sunlit snow or first unfurling of the spring,
The wordless language of look and touch,
The knowing,
Each giving and each taking.
These are not flowers that fade,
Nor trees that fall and crumble.
Nor are they stone,
For even stone cannot the wind and rain withstand,
And mighty mountain peaks in time reduce to sand.
What we were, we are.
What we had, we have.
A conjoined past imperishably present.
So when we walk the woods where once we walked together,
And scan in vain the dappled bank beside you for my shadow,
Or pause where we always did upon the hill to gaze across the land,
And spotting something, reach by habit for my hand,
And finding none, feel sorrow start to steal upon you;
Be still.
Close your eyes.
Breathe.
Listen for my footfall in your heart.
I am not gone but merely walk within you.