

Reflection #14
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Coping with the Fear of COVID 19 Infection
When you physically can not be there for the final hours of your loved one's life.
Practical things to do and say during a "virtual goodbye"

Sometimes the "ideal" is not the "real". Not being physically present at the time of death goes against every principle involved in excellent and compassionate care. That is the "ideal". But the "real" that we are experiencing is that only one family member can be present in care facilities and most often the person dies without family members present. Notice I did not say... die alone. Our healthcare providers are trying to be the extension of the families love and support.

Some helpful hints on how to make a caring and compassionate "Virtual Goodbye":

1. Try and get someone who is not as emotionally involved to take care of the technology. This allows you to be totally present for the virtual session.
2. Make sure the technical person has all the numbers ready in case the session gets dropped.
3. Makes sure all devices are charged and programs are updated.
4. Facetime, Messenger and What's App are simple and effective. Zoom is excellent also.
5. Have a back up plan already in place in case one of the apps fails.
6. It is helpful to have a support person there for you while you participate in the session.
7. If you want private time during the session...ask for it.

Format of Session

Dr. Ira Byock has a wonderful guide that works for a Virtual Goodbye. A dying person and his / her family may need to say:

1. Thank you.
2. Please forgive me.
3. I forgive you
4. I love you.
5. Goodbye.

This short relationship review covers all the significant issues in life.

It is important to review these key themes before the session so that you are prepared emotionally to participate fully. This is the time to pull all the stops.

A virtual goodbye may not be the "ideal" but with some planning and reflection it can become a significant life event.

This model also works when we can not attend a funeral or visitation for a friend that has dies.