



HOSPICE MESSAGES OF HOPE

*When You are Far Away
from a Loved One*

Because of our lifestyles, our work and many other factors, Americans now live hundreds or thousands of miles away from their families. When someone in your family dies, you may not live close enough to support the survivor in person on a daily basis. There are many ways to successfully support your family members through technology and creativity.

TECHNOLOGY

One of the easiest ways to provide support is by telephone. You can stay connected by phoning your loved one two to three times a week and can identify through conversation when they are feeling lost, depressed, lonely, etc. For example, if you are calling your parent after the loss of their spouse, coordinate with your other siblings or family members so someone is calling every day. Schedule this call on your calendar so you are committed to completing it. Vary the time of day you schedule the call so it is an unexpected pleasure for your loved one. As everyone leads busy lives, schedule this call during your commute to or from work as to interfere less with your day.

If your loved one has a computer, use the internet and email to keep connected. Send them inspirational or grief support via the internet. Send daily emails about your life and family to give them a feeling of close connection to you even though distance separates you physically. Keep them connected by sending text messages or electronic pictures of you and your family which they will begin to anticipate. There are wonderful free inspirational videos available on the internet that can be forwarded.

U.S. MAIL

The U.S. mail is another great way to provide support. Sending cards, short notes and prayer cards can provide encouragement and support to a grieving loved one. Along with cards and letters, there are many inspirational prayer and reflection books that offer encouragement for each day. Take the time to create a scrapbook of memories about the family member who died. Put in pictures and stories about the person and mail the scrapbook to their loved one. Sharing those memories will help the survivor work through their grief and trigger new memories they can cherish.

LONG-DISTANCE HOMEWORK

Do some long-distance homework. Talk to the local hospice bereavement coordinator and find out what resources are available. Contact your loved one's pastor to find out what might be available through their church community. Call one of their local friends and use them as a vehicle to accompany them to a grief session or support group meeting. Once involved, they will often continue attending. Not only do they receive support and encouragement, but it opens the door to new friendships and others with whom they can share their grief and receive support.

TIME FOR GRIEF

Another important factor is to remember that everyone needs time. Those first birthdays, holidays, etc., are very difficult and can be very lonely. Make sure you offer this support for more than two weeks or two months. The next 12 months are loaded with "firsts" that your

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loved one must survive alone. Keep the support on track month after month. When you call or write them, don't ignore the "elephant in the room." Talk about their loved one, allow them to talk about their loved one and work through their grief at a pace that is right for them. Many times, we don't realize that burying grief does not make it go away. Talking about the loved one they lost allows them to start thinking about the good memories. Sharing conversation also relieves their burden. No two people grieve the same, so listen carefully and follow their needs and time frame, not yours.

VISITS

If possible, visit your family member. Two or three short visits spread throughout the year are often better than one long visit. If you plan ahead, there are often low-cost fares available. Consider buying them a ticket to come and visit you for a few days. Sometimes a change of scenery or a visit with other family members can change or improve their outlook or emotional state.

OSF Home Care Services is here to support you and wants to meet you wherever you are in your grief journey.

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