

# Trauma and Grief During the Pandemic

SERIES 2 COVID 19 IN INDIA

## Supporting someone you love who is bereaved

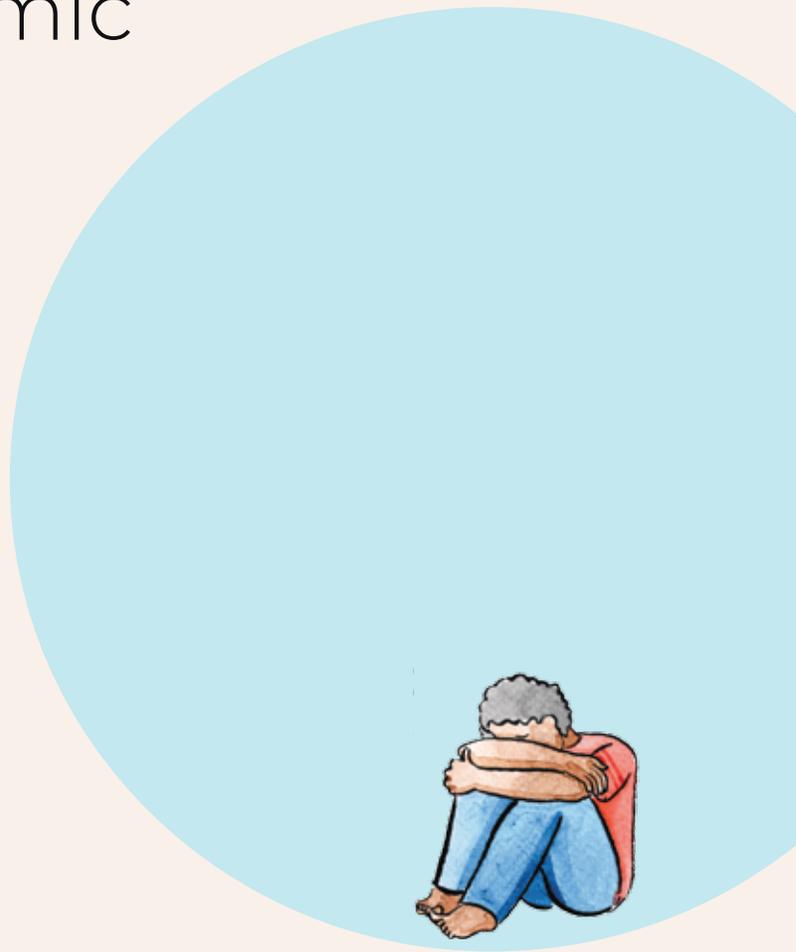
The COVID-19 pandemic has been an immensely difficult time for all of us. Each of us is in need of some support. We are either coping with our own grief, or watching those we love grieve their losses. It is important in these times to turn to one another and console each other, and show your friends and family that you care.

### HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT SOMEONE WHO HAS LOST A LOVED ONE ?

Right now, the simplest ways in which we used to offer support to someone who is bereaved are not available to us:

- ✗ We cannot visit people to spend time together or bring food.
- ✗ We cannot sit with them, or hold hands or show support without words.

But whether or not you can show up, it is important to reach out. The most important thing you can do is to be authentic, and sincere. The rest will follow. We all have our own ways of grieving. Don't be afraid or reluctant to show support. You don't need to say much. Speak from your heart.



### Acknowledge the grief that your friend is experiencing

Grief is a process that runs its own course. But with the pandemic, situations are much harder to handle. Grief will be overwhelming and take a long time. If someone has faced more than one loss in a short time, or been alone without much physical or emotional support, this might be very traumatic.

### Keep an eye out for worrying signs

Many people may not need medical or professional support. But sometimes, the person bereaved may have already had mental health challenges, or guilt or self-blame about the death. A grief counsellor may be very helpful in such a time, and can help the person move through grief gently with tools to handle the overwhelming emotions.

# How can you offer support to someone bereaved?



## Ask for permission

You could ask your friend for permission to help them. Let them know that you are available (in whatever way you can be). Ask if they are okay to talk about the person they have lost.

## Be patient and open

If your friend sounds angry, irritated or a little abrupt, remember that they are coping with a very difficult situation. Try to stay emotionally available, and let them know that it is okay for their moods and emotions to vary.

## Be mindful of your words and actions

Everyone's grief is unique. Be sensitive to how your friend is feeling and let them show you where they are. Ask if they are opening to receiving resources, positive messages, videos or words of wisdom.



## Make gentle suggestions

When you make suggestions for your friend, be gentle with your words. Try not to use statements like "you should", or "you will". You might try to offer thoughts: "Have you considered..", or "you might.."



## Offer your time and presence and an open, listening ear

Offer your time and presence to listen to your friend, if they would like that. Ask how they are feeling and what they are going through.

Let them tell you about the person who they have lost, or how bereft they are feeling. Let them cry if they need to. They might want to confide about what this loss has meant for them. It might mean they have lost an identity or role as a child, parent or spouse.

Sometimes, they may not feel like talking. It is okay to stay silent, too.

## Stay consistent in your show of support

Do not forget to call and message regularly. In these times during the pandemic which are already isolating, the bereaved person may feel lonely after a while, when the calls become fewer. Stay in touch frequently.



## Offer practical help

If you can, send some food, offer to take care of children or help sort and clean things. Make sure you do not overwhelm them with coordination, and be sensitive to COVID-19 protocols. Always ask for permission.





## Some things you might wish to say

It is difficult to find the right words in these difficult times. It might feel like what you are saying is not supportive enough. Just remember to show that you care and are available.

HERE ARE A FEW THINGS THAT YOU CAN SAY WHICH MAKE THE PERSON KNOW THAT YOU CARE AND ARE AVAILABLE TO HELP.

I'M SORRY...

“I am so sorry to hear that \_\_\_ passed away”.

“I wish I had the right words...”

I REMEMBER WHEN...

I just want you to know that I care”.

“I am here to help in any way I can”.

I WISH...

“You and \_\_\_ will be in my thoughts and prayers”.

“My favorite memory of \_\_\_ is \_\_\_”.

I'M HERE FOR YOU...

“I am always just a phone call or a text away.

Please let me know and I will be there for you”.

“We all need help at times like this, I am here for you”.

I HOPE...

“I am usually up early/ late if you need anything”.

Remember that each person has their unique way of grieving.

Try and follow their lead. Respect their journey.

Just knowing that you are with them will be a comfort to the person who is bereaved.



Toll Free NIMHANS Helpline for Psychosocial Support- 080 46110007

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<https://mentalhealtheeducationnimhans.org/covid-resources/covid-19-trauma-and-grief-series/>