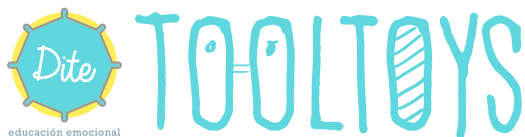


# Grieving a COVID-19 Loss

*Because Not All Goodbyes Are the Same*

To honor the life of:

Written by:



\* Free copy. Not for sale \*

**María Gallo, Cristina Llaca  
and María José Adame**

**Illustrated by Paulina Suárez**

Translated by Benjamin Engelsberg

**Endorsed by:**



***This book is dedicated to all of the children who are suffering due to the loss of a loved one, each of them an individual with unique pain and the undying presence in their hearts of those who left them suddenly.***



“ With you in my memory, I will be able to go on. ”

## Goal

This book is intended to be an emotional tool to help children and adolescents cope assertively with grief caused by the loss of a loved one to COVID-19.

# For adults

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It is important to know how to support children through their grieving process, listen to them, embrace them, answer their questions, and be there with them and for them.

The way children navigate their first experience with grief and have it explained to them will determine how they cope with it in the future.

Telling a child or adolescent that somebody close has died is complicated and tends to cause anxiety in the family. However, there are strategies to lessen the impact by helping them manage the pain of the loss and learn self-regulation.

## How is this done?

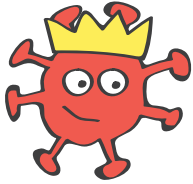
- Always be honest with children.
- Use simple, clear, and direct language, being mindful of their age.
- Explain what happened: “Grandpa passed away,” “your uncle passed away,” and avoid saying things like “he went to heaven,” “he went to sleep forever,” “he went to a better place,” “he turned into an angel,” or “he’s with God now.”
- Let them ask questions and answer truthfully.

- Be there for them.
- Let them know that none of this is their fault.
- If you find it necessary and appropriate, include aspects of your religious beliefs in your talk.

It does not matter if they see you cry; that is emotional coherence. When something hurts, it is normal to cry. It is fine if they see you sad. Explain to them how you feel and what makes you feel better.

- Talk to them about what will happen next (funeral, religious service, wake, cremation, burial), even if they cannot be there.
- Remember together the person who died and look for ways to keep those memories alive.
- Pay attention to their mood and behavior (sleep, eating, play, and communication habits). If there is a significant change over a prolonged period (6 months), seek professional help.
- Try to have moments of distraction and fun together.
- Make sure that their friends, school, and close circle of people know about that loss they experienced.
- Let them know that, with time, everything passes, and, even if it does not seem like it right now, this pain will also pass.

# Introduction

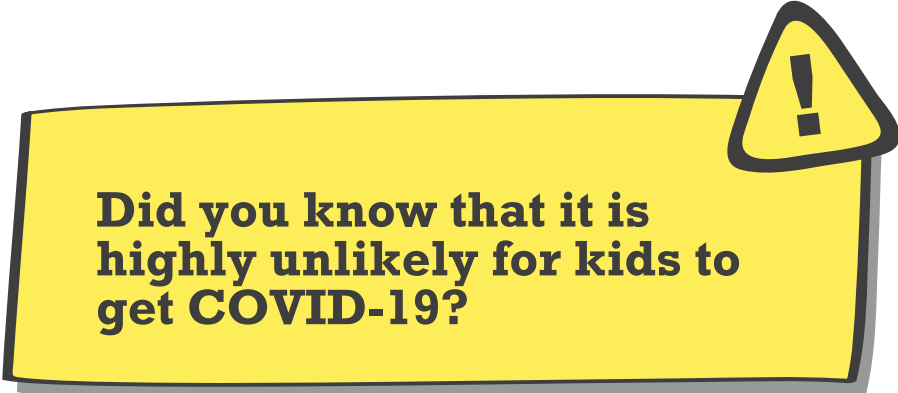


COVID-19 is a new disease that has led to a global pandemic. It is caused by the virus SARS-CoV-2 and spreads easily. You should know that most of the people who get it recover, but some people may die.

COVID-19 has transformed the lives of millions of people around the world. At a certain moment that is hard to pinpoint, our needs and priorities changed, and both adults and children have been left feeling afraid and uncertain. We realize how vulnerable we are and feel defenseless, worried, and like everything is up in the air.

Today, the word **coronavirus** brings about anger, pain, and despair. It will help you to know that, over time, the pain caused by the loss of your loved one will turn into strength to help you move forward. You will be able to hold on to their loving memory in your heart and give it a new meaning.

Thinking about death is difficult and painful. We know that death is part of life and, while it is hard to accept that a loved one has died, you have resources inside of you that will help you get through this.



**Did you know that it is highly unlikely for kids to get COVID-19?**

## Why does losing someone to COVID-19 complicate the grieving process?

- You may have left your loved one “healthy” or not so sick in the hospital and not have seen him or her again.
- You might not have been able to say goodbye the way you wanted to.
- The news usually comes suddenly, and everything happens too fast to take it all in, since the person was fine not long ago.
- For your own safety, you may not be allowed to attend the funeral.
- Stay-at-home restrictions keep people from gathering to say goodbye, which is painful.

Hello!

We know that you are sad, and that it hurts when somebody passes away. Completing this book will help you feel better and understand, express, and take in everything that you are feeling.

- 1** Find a free moment and a place where you feel comfortable and at ease.
- 2** Ask for help if you need it, or ask to do this alone if you prefer.
- 3** You do not have to go in any particular order.
- 4** There is no due date for this, **go at your own pace.**



**Let's get started!**

\* Young children should be accompanied as they complete this book. If they do not know how to read or write, they will need help. An adult should read all instructions and suggestions to the child. There will be times when children prefer to stop and take some time before continuing. They should not be pressured; when they are ready, they will start again.

## **I am thankful for the life of:**

Draw a picture or paste a photo of the two of you together in this space.

“

**I know I am going to miss him,  
but I also know that he will live on forever inside of me.**

”

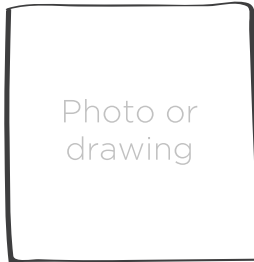
# The Two of Us

## Who are you?

**Name:**

\_\_\_\_\_

Photo or  
drawing



**Nickname:** \_\_\_\_\_

**How old are you?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Favorite color:** \_\_\_\_\_

**They were my:** \_\_\_\_\_

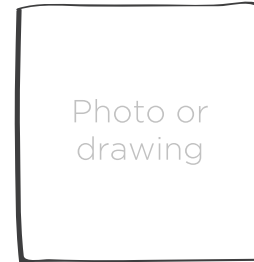
\_\_\_\_\_

## Who was he or she?

**Name:**

\_\_\_\_\_

Photo or  
drawing



**Nickname:** \_\_\_\_\_

**How old were they?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Favorite color:** \_\_\_\_\_

**I was their:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Do you know what they died of?**

Yes  No

**When did they die?** \_\_\_\_\_

Place a  by the characteristics that describe each one of you.

### Are you?

- |                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Active       | <input type="checkbox"/> Cheerful      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Good-looking | <input type="checkbox"/> Generous      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Smart        | <input type="checkbox"/> Smiley        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grumpy       | <input type="checkbox"/> A sleepyhead  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Funny        | <input type="checkbox"/> A big eater   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A dancer     | <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creative     | <input type="checkbox"/> A party lover |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chatty       | <input type="checkbox"/> Affectionate  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shy          | <input type="checkbox"/> Other:        |

### Was he or she?

- |                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Active       | <input type="checkbox"/> Cheerful      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Good-looking | <input type="checkbox"/> Generous      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Smart        | <input type="checkbox"/> Smiley        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grumpy       | <input type="checkbox"/> A sleepyhead  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Funny        | <input type="checkbox"/> A big eater   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A dancer     | <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creative     | <input type="checkbox"/> A party lover |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chatty       | <input type="checkbox"/> Affectionate  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shy          | <input type="checkbox"/> Other:        |

**The two of you had this in common:**



**When people pass away suddenly, it is hard to believe it actually happened.**

Write or draw what happened here:



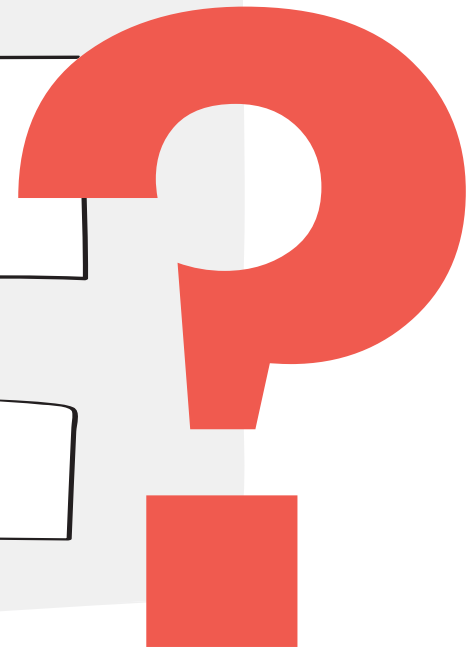
**What will you  
miss the most?** \_\_\_\_\_

# Questions?

**Is there anything else you would like to know about how they died?**

**Do you have any other questions?**

**Who would you like to ask?**



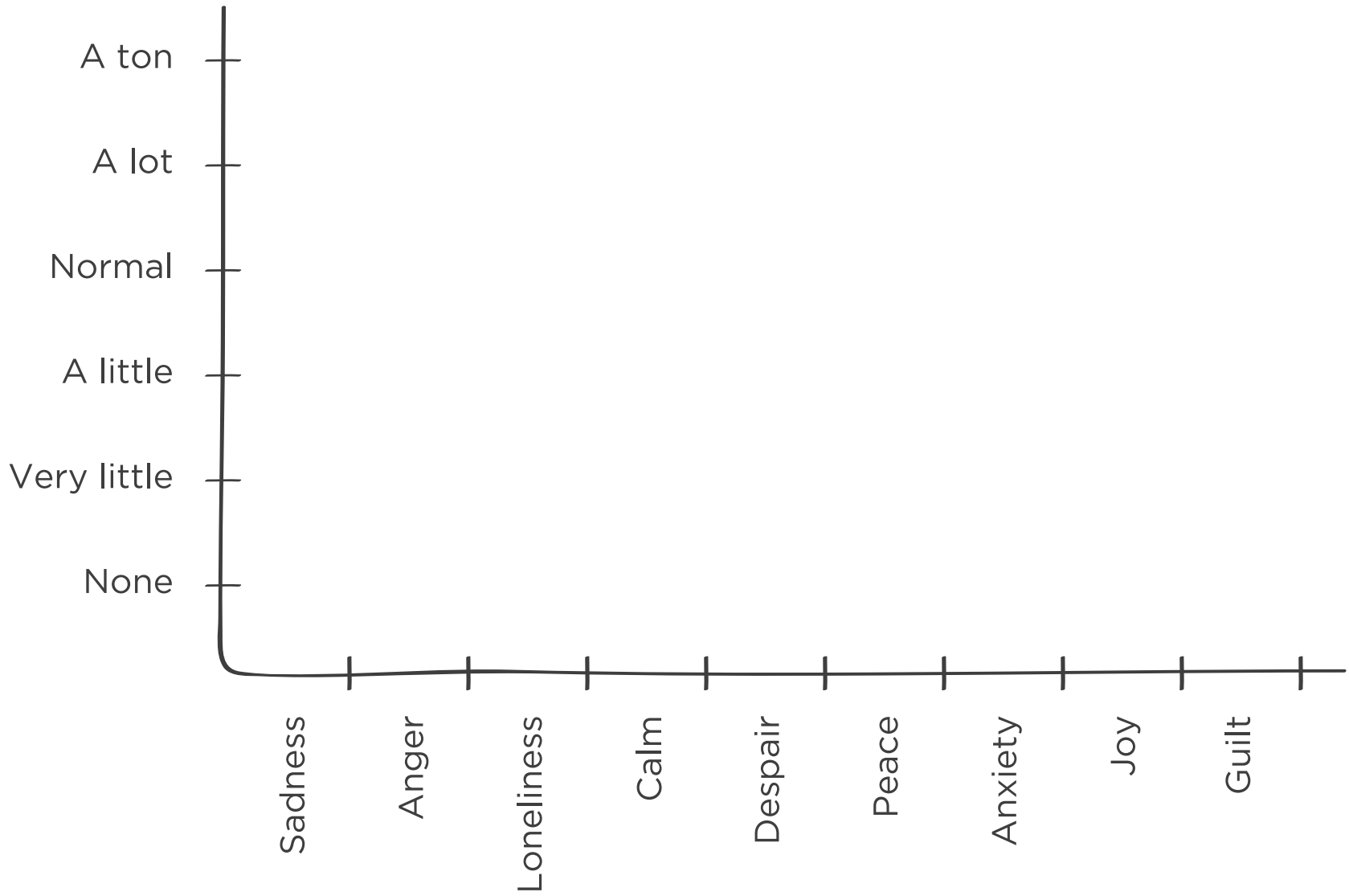
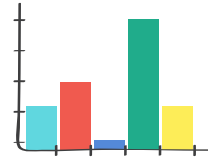
# True or False

**What do you know and believe about COVID-19?** Answer “T” for true or “F” for false.

- COVID-19 is also called coronavirus.
- It is a highly contagious disease.
- Doctors have to take care of many patients while also taking care of themselves.
- Funerals with many people are not allowed.
- There is a shortage of masks, gloves, and medical equipment.
- COVID-19 is only in your country.
- The best thing to do is stay at home.
- We need to wear masks when we leave home.
- All kids can go to school.
- At some point this will be over.
- If a family member gets sick, you can keep that person company at the hospital.
- Most people who get COVID-19 recover.
- It is difficult to communicate with patients who are in the hospital.
- In some hospitals, the rule is that patients who die of COVID-19 have to be incinerated.
- Many funeral homes will not let children in.
- There is still no cure.
- There is a vaccine that will keep you from getting it.
- Those with high blood pressure or diabetes should be even more careful to avoid getting infected.
- It is very rare for kids to get it.

# Graph of Your Emotions

Draw a graph showing how you feel today.



**Who told you that the person passed away?**



**What did they say?**

“  
  
”

Where did they live?

**Where did the person die?**

How often did you see them?

# The last time...

**What do you remember about the last time you saw the person?**

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**What did the two of you do?**

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**Did you eat something together?**

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**What did they tell you?**

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**What was the last thing they said to you?**

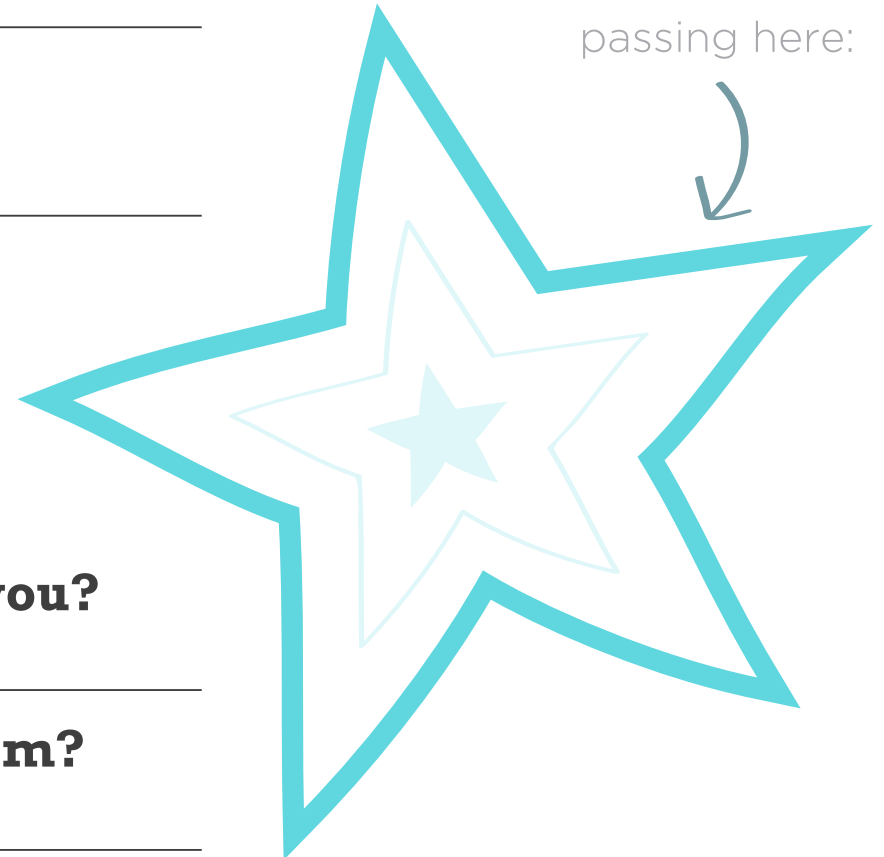
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**What do you remember saying to them?**

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Write what hurts you the most about their passing here:



# Changes

Now that the person is not here, many things will change. What do you think will change?

What will **not** change?

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

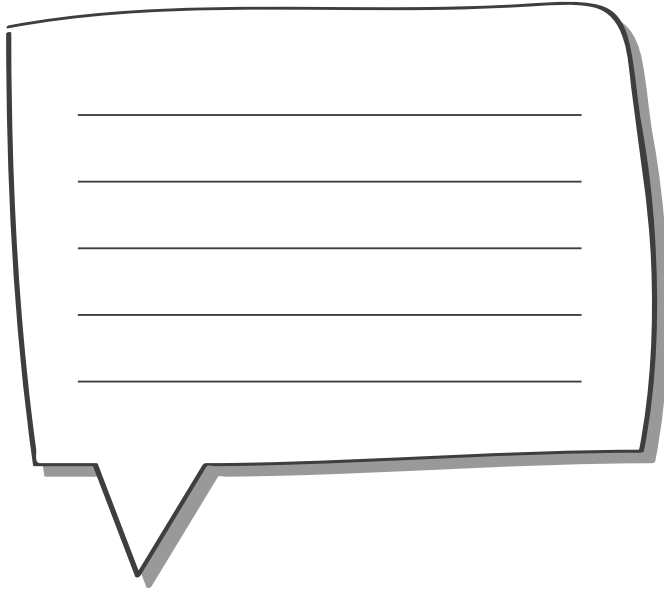
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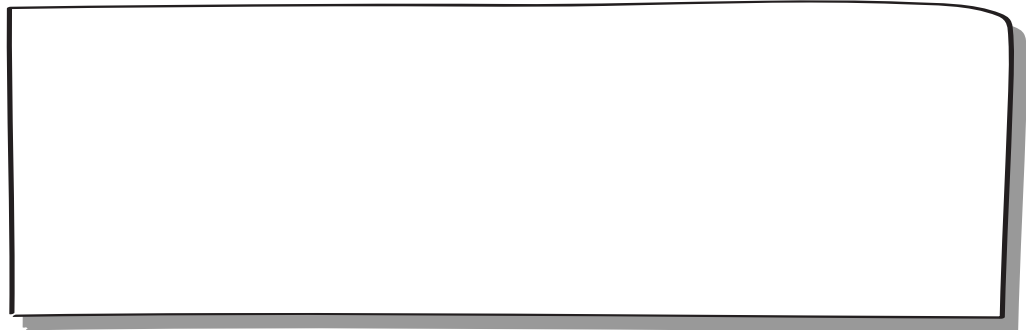
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“ While many things may change, rest assured that **love is still present**, and that there will be many things that, despite all of the changes, **remain the same**. ”

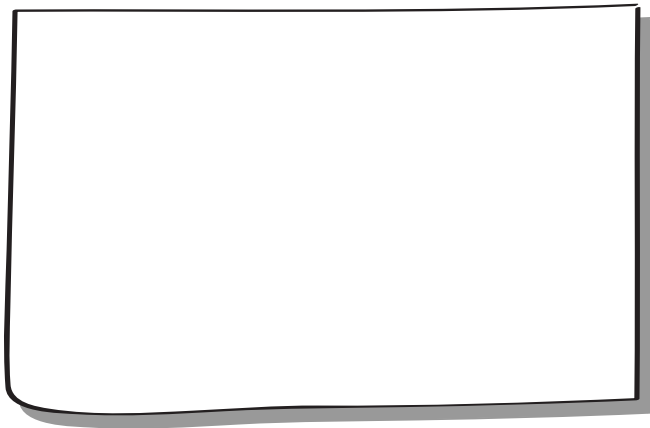
**What would you have liked to say to them?**



**Where would you have liked to go together?**



**Do you feel like you missed the chance to do anything with them?**



**Would you like to apologize to them for anything?**

**Would you like to forgive them for anything?**



# Is there anybody else you would like to forgive?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



**Rest assured that you are not alone. You are important and valuable, and there will always be someone to look after you.**



# What do you need to do when you are sad?

Place a  by as many options as you like.

- |   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cry  | <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Talk to someone                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Watch TV     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hug someone                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Lie down     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Be with: _____                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Be alone     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pray   | <input type="checkbox"/> Draw         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ask questions and have someone answer truthfully | <input type="checkbox"/> Eat          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Write  | <input type="checkbox"/> Read         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sleep  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |



Sometimes we are so sad that we do not even know how to start moving on. A good way is to remember the things we like and what is important to us.



**What do you like to do?**



**What do you like to eat?**



**What do you like to think about?**



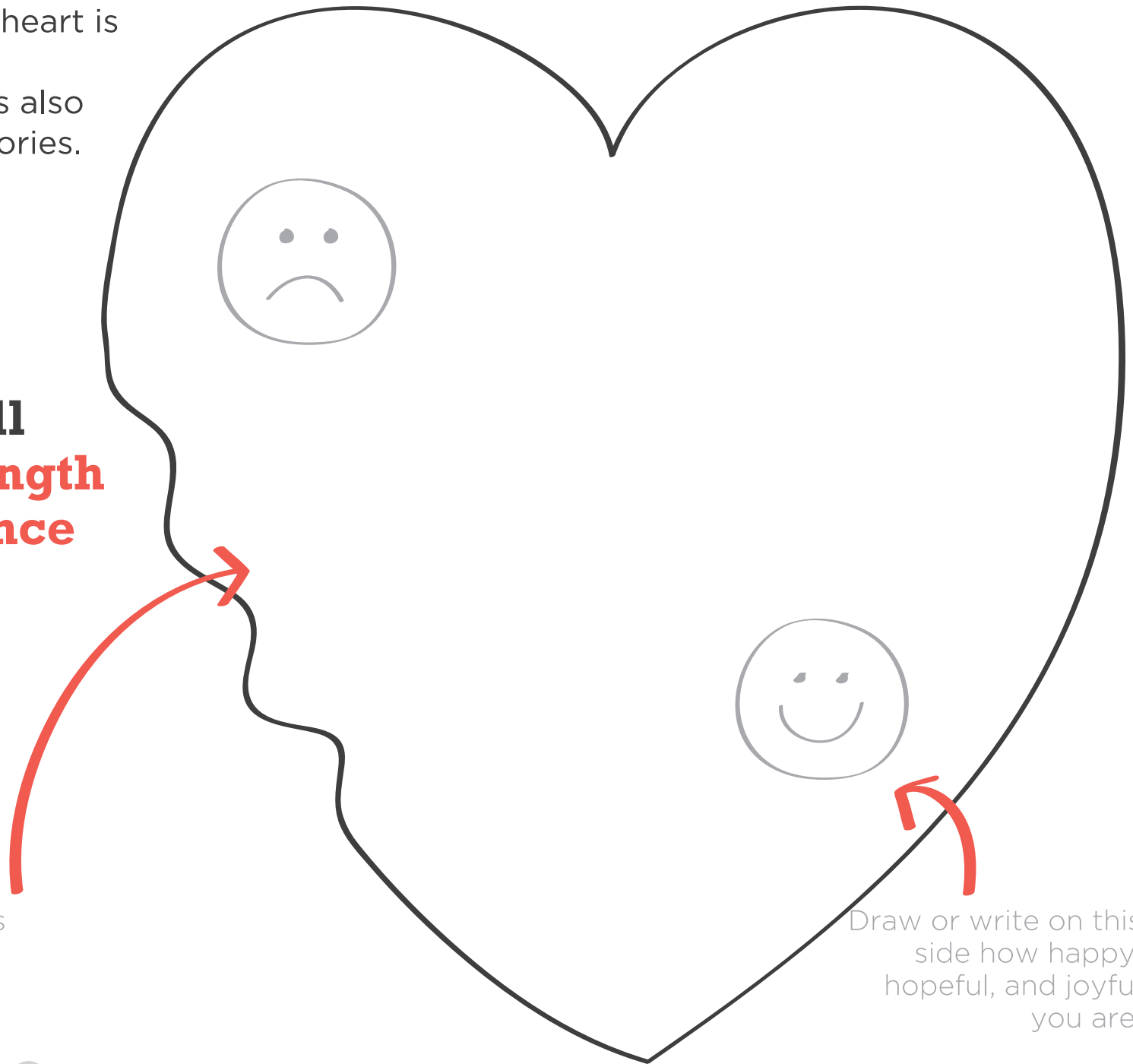
**What do you enjoy the most?**

**What people, things,  
and activities are  
important to you?**

**Do some of this!**  
**It will be a good start!**

Even though your heart is broken right now, remember that it is also full of happy memories.

**In it, you will find the strength and confidence you need to feel better.**



Draw or write on this side how sad and angry you feel.

Draw or write on this side how happy, hopeful, and joyful you are.

# Thank you

In this space, write a goodbye letter with everything you want to say to them.

A large rectangular area with a black border and a folded top-left corner, containing 20 horizontal lines for writing.

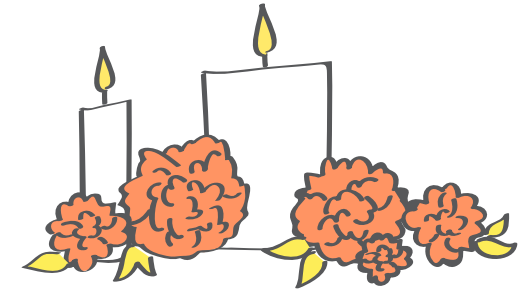
**What is something you learned from them?**

Three horizontal lines for writing the answer to the question above.

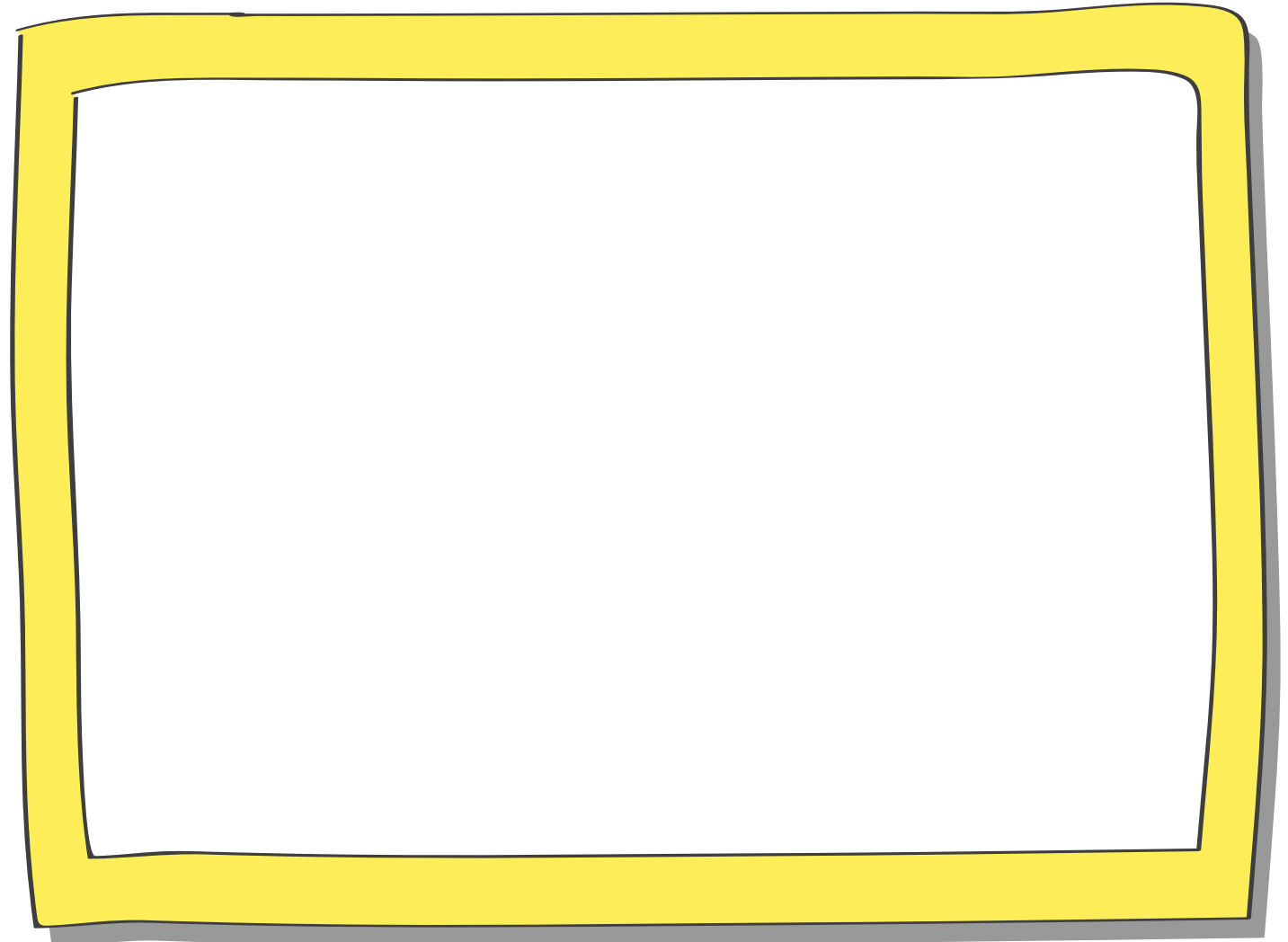
**You will always remember this!**

**“ I am grateful that \_\_\_\_\_ was, is, and will always be part of my story. ”**

**In a special place in your house, make a memorial in honor of their life.** Leave it there for as long as you feel is necessary. In it, you can place flowers, a candle, photos, and anything that reminds you of them.



Once you are finished, paste a photo here.



# In my life

Situations like this make us appreciate life and remember how important and valuable it is.

**What do you enjoy the most about life?**

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**What are your dreams, projects, and goals?**

- ---
- ---
- ---
- ---
- ---



# Remember

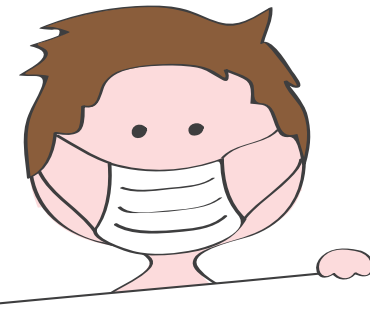
**You can gather objects and phrases that remind you of the person, write a few words to say goodbye, and draw pictures, then store all of these things in a special box.**

Once social distancing is over and the time is right, you can hold a goodbye ceremony with your family and friends and share all of these memories and words, and tell anecdotes about your experiences together.

\*It is a good idea to leave an object or letter where the ashes are laid or where the person is buried.

## **A few suggestions for when you can leave the house again:**

- Get together as a family for a goodbye ceremony.
- Go to the person's favorite place.
- Dress in some kind of meaningful way.
- Set aside a time to share a few words.



**The world needs all of us to keep more people from getting infected, so remember:**



- 1** Stay home.
- 2** Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- 3** Cough or sneeze into the inside of your elbow.
- 4** If you have symptoms, it is important to contact your doctor.
- 5** Avoid direct contact with others (stay 6 feet away).
- 6** Use a mask.

**Thank you!**

**Everything passes, and this too will pass. Remember that social distancing will **NOT** go on forever.**



# Recommendations

**Keep in mind that we are living in a climate of uncertainty and fear, and this has emotional, social, and economic consequences.**

- Remember that social distancing is not the same as emotional distancing.
- As it will be impossible to hold wakes, it is important to perform some kind of goodbye ritual so that children and the rest of the family can begin the grieving process.
- Choose a spot in the house to set up a “memorial space” as a tribute, with a photo of the deceased and some of his or her possessions, as well as flowers, candles, and anything meaningful for the family (it should only stay there for a little while).
- Encourage children to express their emotions in different ways, be it through stories, movies, writing, painting, talking, or sports.
- Hugs and physical contact are a great way to comfort others, but this may not be possible right now. Instead, it may be necessary to seek alternative forms of communication (electronic

media) to support and console loved ones from a distance, so as to avoid loneliness and despair.

- Establishing a routine with daily activities like before the loss will provide children with much-needed stability and structure. It is especially important to resume meal and play times, sleep schedules, and academic and household responsibilities.
- Children may present behavior that they had already overcome, such as wetting the bed, asking for help to get dressed, eat, and do homework, and having difficulty sleeping alone. This is expected and can be attributed to a loss; however, if the behavior continues over a prolonged period (approximately 6 months) without improvement, or if it intensifies, you should seek the support of a specialist.
- **Focus on the “now.” Every day brings a new start.**



**There are no right words to console a grieving heart. Sooner or later, you will all be alright and come out of this stronger; the memory and legacy of the those who departed today will live on forever in you.**



# Finally...

- Anyone who suffers a loss is expected to go through these stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. In this last stage, it is once again possible to laugh, relax, and enjoy life without feeling guilty. You will see that sooner or later, that time comes for everyone.
- Rest assured that you do not need to have all of the answers. It is valid to say ***I don't know***. Your loved ones and you can ask questions together and help each other find the answers.
- It is fundamental for children and adolescents to feel heard, understood, and supported. They should know that somebody will always take care of them and worry about their physical and emotional needs.
- Given stay-at-home restrictions and the coronavirus, the family needs to continue to take care of itself. Reinforcing this will provide a sense of control and safety that children need in order to know they are protected.
- Emphasize that it is highly unlikely for children and adolescents to get COVID-19.

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- Grief
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- Self-esteem
- Nightmares
- Fears and worries
- Identity
- Illness (their own and others')
- Hospitalizations

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