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www.childbereavementuk.org

When you can't visit someone who is ill

Not being able to visit someone, perhaps due to the coronavirus, may add greatly to your anxiety about them, at a time of considerable stress and uncertainty. You may also be supporting children, who look to you for security and guidance. Here are some ideas which may help:

Acknowledge how you feel

Allow yourself to recognize if you are feeling overwhelmed, frightened, angry, numb, guilty, or other difficult feelings. Talk to someone or try journaling about how you feel. Sharing can help you think more clearly and feel more in control.

Focus on what you CAN do

- If the person who is sick is well enough to speak, can you connect with them by phone or video chat?
- Try to get contact information of the person's primary caregiver or a key person on the medical team, and ask for regular updates. Find the best way to keep a regular connection going.
- Have a routine that includes exercise, eating well, regular bedtimes, time to connect with people remotely, as well as fun time and quiet time with children. Talking together when you are going for a walk can work well.

Supporting children

Children can sense tension, and will copy your behavior. Be open with them, so they learn that it is OK to share important news, and to have different feelings.

- Be honest and clear. You might say:
"You know Sam is sick. He is now being taken care of in the hospital. We don't want him to catch the coronavirus, which would make him more ill. So we can't visit him."
- For young children, use simple words and positive ideas. You might say:
"Nanny isn't feeling well. We can't visit her today but let's send her a video. What would you like to say to her?"



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- Answer questions honestly. It is OK to say if you don't know the answer.
- Check their understanding. You might say:

*"That's a great question.
What do you think?"*

- Show your feelings. Children learn how to handle their own emotions when they see you handle yours. You might say:

*"I'm really sad about grandpa being ill,...
but it's OK to be sad sometimes. I'm OK."*

- Give your child an item that connects them to the person who they can't visit.
- Children can write the person a letter or card, or draw a picture, that you send them a picture of.
- With children, create a simple 'I wonder...?' box or jar. You can all write or draw feelings, ideas or worries and put them in the box. You can then have a regular 'share time' using the box. This may help to stop worries building up, and for you to know what your children are thinking. Try to avoid bedtime as a 'share time'.

Be kind to yourself

- Recognize this is a very difficult time, and that you can only do so much.
- Make a list of things that help to calm or distract you when you are not feeling okay. For example – a hot bath, watch a movie, go for a walk, play a game, meditate, take some deep breaths, call a friend.
- Make time for you, and seek support if you need it.

For further resources, you may wish to visit Child Bereavement UK's website:
www.childbereavementuk.org