

## How do I say ‘goodbye’ from afar?

We know that it is helpful for children to say goodbye to a loved one who is dying. Sometimes, visiting the loved one in person during that time is not possible. There are lots of ways children can say goodbye from a distance.

Remember: Use words like “die”, “death”, and “dying”; common phrases like “passed away”, “asleep” or “in a better place” can be very confusing to a child.

### Some Activities to Try

*Some things can be done on their own, such as:*

1. Writing a letter to their loved one of things they would like them to know
2. Drawing a picture of them and their loved one
3. Writing a poem or song about their loved one
4. Reading a book or listening to music that reminds them of their loved one
5. Making a list – what did they learn from their loved one? What do they love most about their loved one?
6. Look at photos or videos of their loved one

*Some things can be shared if they would like, such as:*

1. Calling their loved ones on the phone
2. Send the letter, drawing, song, or poem to their loved one
3. Record the child singing, reading, or saying a special message for their loved one
4. Share stories together about their loved one
5. Read a book together that talks about dying and death, and the different things they may feel
6. Try an activity that their loved one used to enjoy, like cooking or gardening

These are some ideas to get started, but there are lots of other ways to say goodbye from afar. Ask your child what they would like to do and what they think would help them.

### Some Resource Suggestions

Always review books and websites before sharing them with your child to ensure they are age appropriate for your child’s understanding, and align with your family’s beliefs around dying and death.

*Life is like the Wind* by Shona Innes and Irisz Agocs

*The Invisible String* by Patrice Karst and Joanne Lew-Vriethoff

*The Next Place* by Warren Hanson

*Learning to Say Goodbye: When a Parent Dies* by Eda Le Shan

*When Dinosaurs Die* by Laurie Krasny Brown and Marc Brown

*The Fall of Freddie the Leaf: A Story of Life for All Ages* by Leo Buscaglia

*When Someone Very Special Dies* by Marge Heegaard

*Lifetimes* by Bryan Mellonie and Robert Ingpen

Dr. Jay Children’s Grief Centre at [drjaychildrensgriefcentre.ca/programs/resources](http://drjaychildrensgriefcentre.ca/programs/resources)

Kids Grief at [kidsgrief.ca](http://kidsgrief.ca)

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