

Helping Loved Ones Say Goodbye

(Over Phone or Video Call)



How to Guide and Support the Conversation

Health care providers are an invaluable resource in helping loved ones say goodbye to a patient in their last hours or minutes over a phone or video call. The LOVE tool is a technique to help loved ones navigate the conversation.

1 Lead the way forward

- “I am [name], one of the [professionals] on the team.”
- “For most people, this is a tough situation. I’m here to help, if you’d like.”
- “Here’s what our institution / system / region is doing for patients with this condition.”
(State the part directly relevant to that person.)

2 Offer the things that matter to most people

- “We have the chance to make this time special.”
- “Here are some things you might want to say. Choose the ones that ring true for you.”
 - “Please forgive me”
 - “I forgive you”
 - “Thank you”
 - “I love you”
 - “Goodbye”
- “Do any of those sound good?”

3 Validate what they want to say

- “I think that is a beautiful thing to say.”
- “If my [loved one] said that to me, I would feel so valued and touched.”
- “I think he/she can hear you even if they can’t talk back.”
- “Go ahead, just say one thing at a time. Take your time.”

4 Expect emotion

- “I can see that he/she meant a lot to you.”
- “Can you stay on the line a minute? I just want to check how you’re doing.”

Source:

Vital Talk. COVID Ready Communication Playbook, “LOVE”. <https://www.vitaltalk.org/guides/covid-19-communication-skills/>.

Helping Loved Ones Say Goodbye

(Over Phone or Video Call)



How to Guide the Conversation

Below is an example of how health care providers can incorporate the LOVE principles into their conversations with loved ones in preparation for their phone or video call.

Health Care Provider Script

Loved One

1

- "I am one of the [profession] on the team. I know that saying goodbye over the phone or video call can be tough. I'm here to help, if you'd like."
- "I understand, even though you can't be with your [loved one], you have the opportunity to make this time special by thinking through what you want to say."

- "Thank you. I don't know what to do or say. I wish I could be with my [loved one]."
- "My mind is blank, I don't know what to say."
- "I feel like I have so much to say."

2

- "Many people find it helpful to think of the most important thing they want to say. Here are some things that you may want to consider:
 - "Please forgive me"
 - "I forgive you"
 - "Thank you"
 - "I love you"
 - "Goodbye"
- "Do any of those feel right for you?"

- "Maybe I'll just start by saying "I love you", is that ok?"

3

- "I think that's a beautiful thing to say."
- "Your [loved one] can probably hear you and recognize your voice even if they can't respond."

- "But can my [loved one] hear me?"
- "Ok. How should I start?"

- "You could say, 'Hi [loved one's name], it's me...' "
- "Just let me know when you're ready and I can help put the phone to their ear or set up the video call."

- Silence during conversation

4

- "That was such a touching conversation, I felt honored to be a part of it. How are you doing?"

Source:

Center to Advance Palliative Care (CAPC). Saying Goodbye to a Dying Family Member Over the Phone: Conversation Script. Updated March 27, 2020. <https://www.capc.org/toolkits/covid-19-response-resources/>.