

When the Nursing Facility Restricts Visitors Due to Coronavirus: A Guide to Supporting Your Loved One

While we may understand the reasoning behind the visiting restrictions, the inability to visit your loved one can cause anxiety for them and for you. Understandably, the focus is now on infection control and reducing the risk of spreading a virus that is more dangerous to the immunocompromised and elderly population. Consider these actions to maintain connection with your loved one:

Tip #1: Start a Card Shower

Invite family and friends to send a card or a letter to your loved one with encouraging words, explaining that visits are restricted for their safety. A social media post or a group text can accomplish this easily. This can lift their spirits and conveys your love and concern. Your loved one will look forward to receiving the cards.

Tip #2: Make Use of Your Phone and FaceTime

Stay in contact with your loved one through phone calls if they are able to use the phone, and if possible, ask your healthcare professional to FaceTime with them. Call throughout the day if necessary. Plan your calls for the same time every day. This gives them something to look forward to and helps you get through this difficult time.

Tip #3: Contact the Nursing Facility As Often As Needed

You are naturally more concerned about the needs of your loved one when you cannot see them often. Don't hesitate to call the facility to ask questions about:

- your loved one's care;
- their plan to provide interaction (social-emotional care);
- their plan to keep you informed of changes and updates.

Tip #4: Expect the Emotions

- Fear, guilt, and helplessness can be experienced when you can't see your loved one.
- Allow yourself to feel your feelings and let them rise. These feelings are normal.
- Discussing your feelings and concerns with end-of-life professional (social worker, chaplain, nurse) can help you process your feelings.

Tip #5: Stay Informed and Healthy

Follow the Centers for Disease Control updates and briefings, watch the news, and practice preventive hygiene habits of washing your hands, observing social distancing, and limiting exposure to large crowds. You will want to be healthy to visit when the visiting restrictions are lifted.

Tip #6: Take Care of Yourself

Many caregivers are used to putting others first. Use this time to:

- read a relaxing book
- move your body and get outside in nature
- call a friend and receive their encouraging words
- nap, bake, watch a show, or pursue a hobby