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Remember: Gathering Memories from Others

After the death of your loved one, a new clock starts ticking. You have a limited amount of time to gather stories and information about them from others. We often feel inhibited asking people about our loved one, but it is easily the best source of stories and information. And if we don't start, those stories will be lost. Here are some considerations for gathering stories about your loved one from others.

Considerations on Gathering Stories from Others

- Most people are happy to help. Just ask.
- Make things as easy as possible for your interviewee. Be considerate in terms of where and when to meet.
- Give them some time between asking and interviewing to let them reflect back on their history with your loved one.
- Ask them if they have any pictures or videos. Inquire about making copies.
- Ask co-workers. Co-workers often spend as much or more time with people than family members do.
- Don't expect epic tales. Small stories about day-to-day matters are important too.
- Understand that the interviewee is likely grieving them too. Be sensitive to that. Also, respect the interviewee's privacy and don't push too hard.
- Think in advance if you want to take notes or record the interviewee. Make sure this is OK with them before arriving.
- Be sure to thank the interviewee with a note.
- Reflect on the interview and take some notes immediately afterwards.
- Although people are often the best source of stories, you may also gather information from journals, letters, notes, photos, videos, and other sources.