



For transplant recipients: Writing to your donor's family

Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Network's Donor Family Services team helps facilitate communications and connections that transplant recipients wish to pursue with the families of their donors. The decision to correspond with your donor's family is personal. The best time to write is the time that is right for you.

Donor families welcome and appreciate communication. When you acknowledge their loss and express your gratitude, you affirm that their loved one's gift was meaningful. Remember, there are no wrong words; even a simple thank you is appreciated. You may wish to keep identities anonymous and confidential, or you may choose to disclose your identity and share contact information with your donor's family. While Gift of Hope does not redact identifying information, some transplant programs have privacy guidelines that affect such disclosure. You can check with your transplant program if you have questions about their policy on this.

How do I begin?

You can begin your letter with "Dear Donor Family." Acknowledge and express sympathy for the family's loss. Express gratitude for the gift of life. Write what you feel comfortable sharing about yourself. This may include your occupation, hobbies, interests and what led to your need for a transplant. Helpful language includes: "I offer my condolences for the loss of your loved one." "I offer my sincere gratitude for the gift of life." "Please know I am forever grateful for the second chance this gift has given me."

Where do I send my letter?

Please email your letter to donorfamilies@giftofhope.org. At the top of your email, please include your name, date of transplant and your transplant hospital. Email is strongly encouraged, for quickest delivery and to avoid the risk of a mailed letter getting lost.

Will I hear back from my donor's family?

You may or may not hear back from your donor's family. Some families write back immediately; others wait for a period of time, and some choose not to write. Writing is as personal a decision for them as it is for you. In any case, even if they are not ready to respond, families often find great comfort in hearing how their loved one's donation has changed your life.

You can find additional guidance including a sample letter and information on upcoming writing workshops on our website, at giftofhope.org/donor-family-services.

If you would like help writing your letter or have more questions, please reach out to us any time at donorfamilies@giftofhope.org, 877-577-3747 or by mail at:

Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network
Attention: Donor Family Services
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