

## Simple Steps in Supporting Older LGBTQ Friends and Loved Ones at End of Life

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Being present with our LGBTQ friends and loved ones during the end of life is often an emotional, yet rewarding journey. Offering support is the first step, but knowing what and how to offer this support can be overwhelming. The author of this tip sheet accompanied a dear friend during his end-of-life and offers these simple steps to consider:

- Hear their fears and concerns.
- Remind them of what a difference they have made for you.
- Validate their life stories.
- Ask if there are any partners, family, friends and caregivers with whom they would like to connect or reconnect. You can be a bridge to help with these connections.
- Tell them specific reasons why you love them and how important they have been to your life.
- Share a meal or their favorite snack.
- Suggest reducing background noise when you go to visit. Loud TV and music can be distracting. Ask if there is a private place where you can visit.
- Don't feel pressured to fill the silence. Hold their hand and simply be.
- If your friend or loved is out as LGBTQ, support them in addressing homophobia and transphobia with their permission. One way is to suggest LGBTQ cultural competency training such as that offered by SAGECare at [sageusa.care](http://sageusa.care).
- Offer to look through photos together. Encourage stories. Record them if they give you permission. You are likely to yearn to hear their voice again after they are gone. (Do not share the recordings with others unless given permission from your friend or loved one.)
- Laugh with them. This does not negate that they are dying. It furthers your connection with them.
- Allow them as much time as they need to get out their thoughts.
- Try to stay as present and focused as possible.
- Support your friend or loved one in reporting concerns related to abuse and neglect related to their care.

*See resources on next page for more information.*

## Resources

Reporting Elder Abuse and Neglect: If your friend or loved one is living in an assisted living or skilled nursing community, you can contact the local Ombudsman Office with any concerns. The National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center has searchable database for locating the nearest Ombudsman Office found online at [National Consumer Voice \(theconsumervoice.org\)](https://www.theconsumervoice.org).

If your friend or loved one is living in their own home, apartment, or independent senior living community, you can report suspected abuse and neglect to the local Adult Protective Services office. The national Elder Care Locator will be able to connect you with local Adult Protective Services and other needed resources by calling 1-800-677-1116 or searching their website at: [eldercare.acl.gov/](https://eldercare.acl.gov/)

The National Resource Center on LGBT Aging provides additional resources that may be of support to you including:

LGBTQ Resident Rights - [lgbtagingcenter.org/housing](https://lgbtagingcenter.org/housing)

Caregiving Supports - [lgbtagingcenter.org/caregiving](https://lgbtagingcenter.org/caregiving)

End of Life – [lgbtagingcenter.org/endoflife](https://lgbtagingcenter.org/endoflife)

Elder Justice – [lgbtagingcenter.org/elderjustice](https://lgbtagingcenter.org/elderjustice)

The NRC is grateful to Sue Van Zante-Peiser for sharing these useful suggestions for others who are supporting a friend or loved one during their end of life.

Sue Van Zante-Peiser is a radically grateful Jewish lesbian mother, wife, and agent of social change. She is a funny, soulful creative non-fiction writer. You can check out her blog at [bakethreecakes | some recipes for joy \(wordpress.com\)](https://bakethreecakes.wordpress.com). She dedicates this fact sheet to her dear friend, Ed.