

## WRITING TO YOUR DONOR FAMILY

A THANK YOU HELPS BEAR THE SORROW OF THEIR LOSS

If you are reading this now, your life has probably been saved or enhanced by the amazing gift of donation from someone you've never met. You no doubt are aware that sadness and loss have accompanied the gift of donation you received. And so you,

like many recipients, may be confused about what to say or do. You may want to express your gratitude, but feel afraid that you will intrude or add to the donor family's grief. This guide is meant to address your concerns and provide you with instructions for corresponding with your donor family.

Experience shows that donor families want to know their gift has been received and that it has made a difference in someone's life. A thank you card or letter from their recipient can often help them to bear the

sorrow of their loss. A card or letter is not generally thought of as an intrusion as long as you communicate in a sensitive way.

We also recognize that not all recipients feel able to express their thoughts to their donor family. They may choose not to write. This does not mean they are less thankful. These recipients have expressed to us that they live each day quietly remembering the generosity of their donor families. Occasionally those same recipients decide to express their gratitude in a card or letter at a later time.

DonorConnect and your transplant social worker/coordinator will facilitate correspondence with your donor family. At DonorConnect, it is our belief that donor families and recipients have the right to engage in mutually acceptable forms of communication, as they desire, with respect to confidentiality. There is no right or wrong way to approach this communication, and there is no timeline for when you should write. General guidelines are included on the other side.

## WHEN WRITING TO YOUR DONOR FAMILY, PLEASE CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING INFO:

**TO RESPECT CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY PLEASE DO NOT INCLUDE YOUR LAST NAME, ADDRESS, CITY, PHONE NUMBER OR EMAIL, FACEBOOK OR BLOG CONTACT, OR NAMES OF HOSPITALS OR PHYSICIANS.**

Donor families are always appreciative of a letter from a recipient, even if they do not desire to have direct contact. Still, other donor families seek to move in the direction of a free, direct, and mutual exchange between themselves and the recipient.

DonorConnect is here to facilitate the communication you want, not to direct you as to how or if you should communicate.

Just as you had to make the decision to write your donor family, the donor family also needs to decide whether they feel comfortable to read your correspondence, and write back. If you do not receive any return correspondence from the donor family, please remember that the donor family is coping with the loss of their loved one and that individuals handle grief in different ways. We at DonorConnect are thankful that you took the time to write to the family and express your gratitude. Even if they feel unable to communicate with you, they will always know that you cared and were thankful for their donation.

If we do receive correspondence from the donor family, we will send it on to you through your transplant social worker/coordinator. **The only way you and your donor family could come to know each other's identity is if you mutually agree to exchange that information.**

If you need further information about writing to donor families, or have any questions at all, feel free to contact Donor Services at DonorConnect at 801.478.7350 or email [familyservices@donorconnect.life](mailto:familyservices@donorconnect.life)

- Acknowledge and express sympathy for the donor family's loss.
- Thank the donor family.
- Use simple language. Be sensitive to the feelings of the donor family.
- Share general information about your life, occupation, family and friends, hobbies and interests.
- Write about your transplant experience using simple language, not medical jargon, and how it has affected your life.

---

PLACE YOUR COMPLETED LETTER IN AN **UNSEALED** ENVELOPE. INCLUDE A SEPARATE SHEET OF PAPER WITH YOUR FULL NAME AND YOUR DATE OF TRANSPLANT. GIVE TO YOUR TRANSPLANT SOCIAL WORKER OR COORDINATOR. THEY WILL MAIL NOTE TO DONORCONNECT.

---

# SAMPLE LETTER

*Here is a sample letter with ideas to help you begin writing. This is intended as a resource, and you should not feel that you have to follow the suggestions given. You may choose to write when you feel ready. There is no specific waiting period you need to follow.*

Dear Donor Family,

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ (first name only). I have tried many times to write a letter to you, but never felt that I could find the right words. I am the grateful recipient of your loved one's \_\_\_\_\_ (organ).

Whenever I think about my transplant, I remember that you experienced a significant loss. For that I am very, very sorry...

Offer your condolences for the family's loss. Consider expressing gratitude that they chose to donate during a difficult time.

I am married and have \_\_\_\_\_ children...

I am single and have a dog...

I am in the \_\_\_\_\_ grade and...

Tell the donor family a little bit about yourself, your family, and what kinds of things you enjoy doing.

The reason I needed a transplant was...

Brief explanation is preferred.

Prior to my transplant I wasn't able to participate in....

Now I am able to enjoy...

Tell the family how you felt prior to the transplant and how you are doing now. Is there something you're able to do now that you were not able to do in the recent past? How does your family feel now that you've received the transplant?

I think about my donor every day...

I pray for my donor and your family...

Every time I'm able to walk around the block...

End letter with a sentence or two about how you feel about your donor.

Sign your first name only.

# SOCIAL MEDIA

If you receive a letter from your donor family, **please be considerate to the author of the letter and not share** any correspondence on social media, unless the person who wrote the letter is in agreement.

**Please do not use social media to contact your donor family** until you have had written correspondence and mutually agree to direct contact. While you may believe you have found the right family, mistakes have occurred in the past. If you are contacted by someone who thinks you are their recipient, please do not respond until you contact DonorConnect so we can assist you on how to proceed. See contact information below.

For the initial correspondence between you and your donor family, **it is preferred that correspondence be done through DonorConnect** so as to avoid any misunderstanding or miscommunication between recipients, donor families, and your transplant center.

Donor Family Services  
DonorConnect

230 South 500 East, #490  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84102

801-478-7350  
familyservices@donorconnect.life

