

# How to Create a Collective Grief Ritual

*A simple guide for communities, families, and caregivers*

## 1. Name the Grief

Begin by acknowledging what you are grieving together — the losses of the pandemic, of loved ones, of safety, of ways of life. Speaking it aloud or writing it down gives grief a container.

## 2. Honor the Ancestors

Invite people to bring photos, names, or stories of loved ones who have died. Create a simple altar, memory table, or wall where ancestors can be acknowledged. Remember: grief connects us to all who came before.

## 3. Kindle the Light

Use candles, lanterns, or lamps to symbolize light in darkness. Each person may light a candle for their grief or in memory of someone. If outdoors, string lights, fire pits, or lanterns can hold the ritual.

## 4. Offer a Gesture of Release or Connection

Place stones in a bowl of water, representing tears returned to the river of humanity. Tie ribbons to a tree, write messages on paper and burn them, or share a song or moment of silence. Choose a simple action that expresses both sorrow and solidarity.

## 5. Close with Witnessing

End with one word of blessing, gratitude, or hope from each participant. Or hold a shared silence, hand to heart, breathing together. Remind everyone: grief is not madness — it is love, seeking a place to flow.

■ Tip: Link rituals to existing seasonal holidays —

- Ancestor Days: Día de los Muertos, All Souls', Obon.
- Light Festivals: Diwali, Hanukkah, Winter Solstice, Christmas, Kwanzaa.
- Harvest Gatherings: Sukkot, Mid-Autumn Festival, Thanksgiving.

## Reflection Prompt:

*What loss do I still carry that longs to be named in community?*