



TO YOUR HEALTH

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Goodbye Letters to Loved Ones

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What if today was the last day of your life? Would you have unfinished business with your loved ones? Are there important things left unsaid, fences to be mended, someone you wanted to thank or acknowledge or encourage? Did you make a point of telling those whom you have loved how much they have meant to you? Have you ever considered writing letters to your dear ones to be read after you're gone?

One constant in this life is its impermanence. Any moment could be our last. Whether we're chronically ill or well, we have no crystal ball and no way of knowing how long our lives will be. When we are young, some of us think we will live forever. As the years progress, we watch as our lives go by, year after year, and start to consider that our life, too, will be finite. When we start to lose our peers, the idea of our own mortality can become more real.

Sometimes it's easier to let things go unsaid rather than to bare our hearts to each other. Have you tried to pass on the lessons you have learned in life to your loved ones? Have you told them about what you've accomplished or about your regrets? There are many forms a letter like this could take and we can each choose what best suits our needs.


Letters can be deeply meaningful for those who will survive us after we're gone. On *The Moth Radio Hour*, the author and radio personality, Tom Bodett tells the story of how difficult his relationship was with his father when he was growing up. He admits that they never really learned how to talk to each other. When Tom was a young man, he was electrocuted. His heart stopped but it started again when he landed on his back after a 30 foot fall from an electrical pole.

While Tom was in the hospital recuperating from the injuries he suffered, he recalled his father sitting in the corner of his room watching him endure a painful procedure. At the time, Tom thought his father was judging him for being so careless to get electrocuted.

After leaving the hospital Tom received a letter from his father that changed his life. In the letter, his father told him that when he saw Tom in the hospital, he was as wounded as any soldier. He watched how Tom had handled it with such strength and courage. His father told him that he loved him and encouraged him to take care of himself. Reading these heartfelt words from the man he assumed had only judged him harshly was a revelation for Tom, who was subsequently able to turn his life around and forge a less destructive path. With their inability to communicate, the letter became the delivery system for his father's expression of his love and admiration for his son.

At the website, LastGoodbyeLetters.com, there are helpful ideas about how to start such a letter. One need not wait until they are on their deathbed to write a goodbye letter. When someone needs encouragement, a letter can lift the spirits. Times of transition, like the graduation of a young person who is just heading off to college or starting out in a new career, can be the perfect time. Consider giving a letter of appreciation to a family member or friend at the holidays as a gift.





Good bye!

One young father who was terminally ill wrote letters to his daughter to be opened at different times in her life. Each letter was sealed in an envelope that was labeled with the time or occasion for it to be opened. Even though he knew he would not be alive for important events like her graduation, wedding and the birth of her children, he used the letters to impart his hard-earned wisdom and advice to his daughter. As she navigated through life's transitions and challenges, these letters were a powerful way to still be able to feel a connection to the father she had lost.

At Stanford University School of Medicine, Dr. VJ Periyakoil developed the **Stanford Letter Project**

(<http://med.stanford.edu/letter/about.html>) to give people tools so they can start these letters to their loved ones at any time in life.

In this technological world we live in, the fine art of letter writing is getting lost in the shuffle. Younger generations who have grown up with computers seem absolutely fearless when figuring out new electronic devices and navigating technology. It seems as if computer knowledge is ingrained in children from birth, however they may not know the first thing about addressing an envelope let alone writing a letter. As we are becoming a more virtual society that uses email, texts and short tweets to communicate, it seems rare that we receive a hand-written or even typed letter on actual paper. The impact of a heartfelt letter from a loved one could make a world of difference in a life.



Health Education Lecture

**Dr. Delia Sang will present:
"Update on Macular
Degeneration"**

Dr. Sang is a well-known Boston ophthalmologist associated with Vitreoretinal Consultants of Brookline.

**Please join us for this lecture on
Friday, June 30
in Auditorium Center
3:30pm - 4:30pm**

"Another Reason to Eat More Fiber"

A diet rich in fiber can have many health benefits, from lowering blood pressure and weight, to reducing inflammation and improving blood sugar levels. New research published in the journal *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases* found a link between a diet rich in fiber and osteoarthritis (OA) of the knee. Overall, the study showed that a higher intake of fiber reduced the risk of developing painful OA. The study also revealed that consuming more fiber in general, as well as more cereal fiber in particular, significantly reduced the risk of the knee pain getting worse. Good sources of fiber include nuts, legumes, fruit, whole grains, and non-starchy vegetables.

