



# Writing to your Donor's Family

How do I say *Thank You?*

**Amy Miller & Henry Rogers**  
Living Kidney Donor &  
Kidney Recipient

**LifeCenter**  

# The Decision to Write

Choosing to write to your donor's family is a deeply personal decision.

There is no period of time that is too soon or too late to write.

The appropriate time is when you are ready to reach out.



# Writing is an Opportunity

Donation is *confidential*.

Writing provides an *opportunity* to:

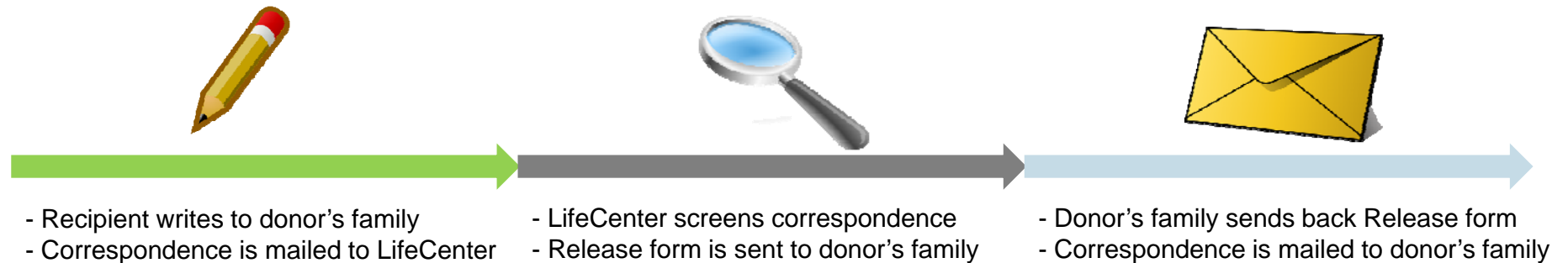
Offer *condolences* to your donor's family for their loss

Express your *gratitude* for the gift you've received

*Share* information about yourself

*Learn* more about your donor

# The Writing Process



If a donor family writes first or writes back to a recipient, the same process takes place.

Writing continues through LifeCenter until both parties express a written interest in Direct Communication.

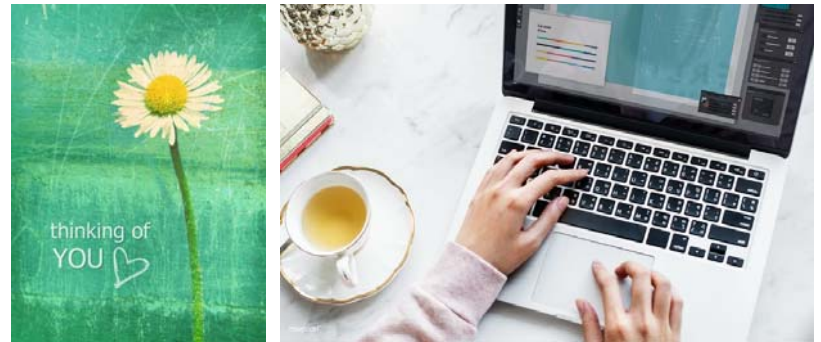
# Getting Started

You may send a card, letter, or both.

Grab a pen and paper, choose a card, or sit in front of a computer.

Take your time...and think about the *message* you want to send to your donor's family.

When in doubt, keep it simple and speak from the *heart*.



# Since donation is confidential, what *may* I include about myself?

- The first names of you and your family members
- Your occupation (what you do, not where you work)
- The state in which you live
- Your hobbies and interests
- The type of transplant you received and length of time waiting
- The ways your health has improved and how your life has changed
- Milestones you have been able to experience since transplant
  - Examples: Getting married, graduating, having children, becoming a grandparent, etc.
- Activities you have resumed or started since transplant
  - Examples: Running first 5K, traveling, spending time with family, returning to work, etc.

# To maintain confidentiality, please *do not* include the following:

- The last names of you and your family members
- Your specific occupation
- The city or town in which you live
- Name of the hospital where you received your transplant
- Name of your transplant surgeon or team
- Your social media information
- Your contact information
- Any information or combination of details that is identifiable if searched

# Writer's block?

## Consider these questions...

What does receiving this gift mean to you and your family?

How has donation impacted/changed you? (who you are, your perspective, etc.)

What do you do now to honor your donor? (...or what will you do?)

If the donor's family could only read one sentence from you, what would it be? (write it)

What will you do? What are your goals, hopes, future plans?

*Thank you* may not seem like enough...

but these two words of gratitude can bring comfort to a donor's family.



# Words from a Donor Mother...



“My life was shattered after losing my only child, but I hoped to learn that Nick’s gift of organ and tissue *enhanced* the lives of not only the recipients but their families as well.

It was so important for me to hear the recipients were happy and living *fulfilling* lives because of Nick’s decision to be an organ and tissue donor!”

~ Debbie, Donor Mother

# Final Thoughts...

It is appropriate to acknowledge the family's loss in your letter.

If making any religious comments within your letter, please keep in mind the faith and beliefs of the donor's family are unknown.

If you feel that you cannot put into words what you are thinking, you may wish to purchase a greeting card and sign your first name.

Ask a friend or family member to read your letter, since they know you and your story.

*What* you say and *how* you say it are not nearly as important as the sentiment behind your intention.

# Where do I send my card or letter?

Correspondence can be mailed to:

LifeCenter

Attn: Family Aftercare

615 Elsinore Place, Suite 400

Cincinnati, Ohio 45202



Correspondence can be emailed to:

Aftercare@LifePassItOn.org

Please enclose the following on a *Separate* slip of paper:

Your full name

Date of transplant

Hospital where you received your transplant



# Will I hear back from my donor's family?

Honestly...we don't know.

*Everyone's situation is different.*

*Everyone's grief journey is unique.*

*Everyone's timeline is respected.*

Some families respond fairly quickly, while others may need more time.

Some families may be too overwhelmed with emotion to respond.

Some find comfort in hearing from their loved one's recipient(s), but aren't ready to write.

We encourage those who wish to write, to do so.

There are no guarantees of a response, but expressing gratitude can be therapeutic.

# Am I able to meet my donor's family?

As mentioned, donation is confidential and LifeCenter is dedicated to maintaining that confidence. For this reason, writing is facilitated through LifeCenter **unless** there is a mutual desire to communicate directly.

Direct Communication **only** takes place when a donor's family and recipient have established a written relationship (written back and forth), both parties have expressed an interest in meeting, exchanging contact information, or wanting to communicate outside of LifeCenter (including through social media).

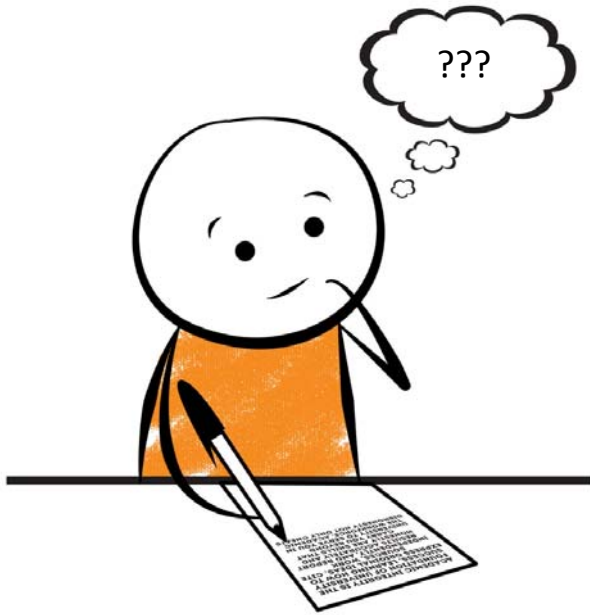
If this occurs, LifeCenter will help guide the process of Direct Communication.

"To a recipient I would say -  
Don't worry about finding the right words.  
The only wrong thing that you could say is nothing.  
Our grief is real,  
no words you can write will make it worse -  
they can only make it better.  
Speak from the heart.  
We only wish to know that you are better,  
that your life has improved,  
and that you are doing things you couldn't do before.  
Those are the words that give us comfort."

~ A Donor Mother



# Questions?



If you have specific questions, please call us at (513) 558-5555 and ask to speak with a Family Aftercare Coordinator or send an email to [Aftercare@LifePassItOn.org](mailto:Aftercare@LifePassItOn.org).

Thank you.