

Writing to your Donor's Family

Writing anything can be a challenge. Staring at a blank sheet of paper, you want to make sure to convey what you're thinking and feeling, and to do it accurately, while keeping the tone just right.

That's a tall order, even for a relatively simple business or personal communication.

But sitting down to write a note to a donor family, especially to your donor family, can feel overwhelming to the point of wanting to give up. You may have entered a state of perpetual procrastination.

There are some simple, easy steps you can take to move yourself out of inactivity. Think of it, simply, as "staging."

The next time you're in a store with a good card selection, browse awhile and find one or two that you like. You might put them aside, or set them in a place where you can glance at them every now and then. Stage one is now complete.

Then, on a day when you're feeling good and the time feels right, get out a piece of paper and start writing. Stage two has begun—the first steps toward your rough draft.

The key is to take a step when the opportunity presents itself, and the next step when another opportunity arises. The process of writing your letter may take a month or more, but at least you've moved from inactivity to activity—toward something that could mean a lot to a donor family.



 **Transplant Living**SM

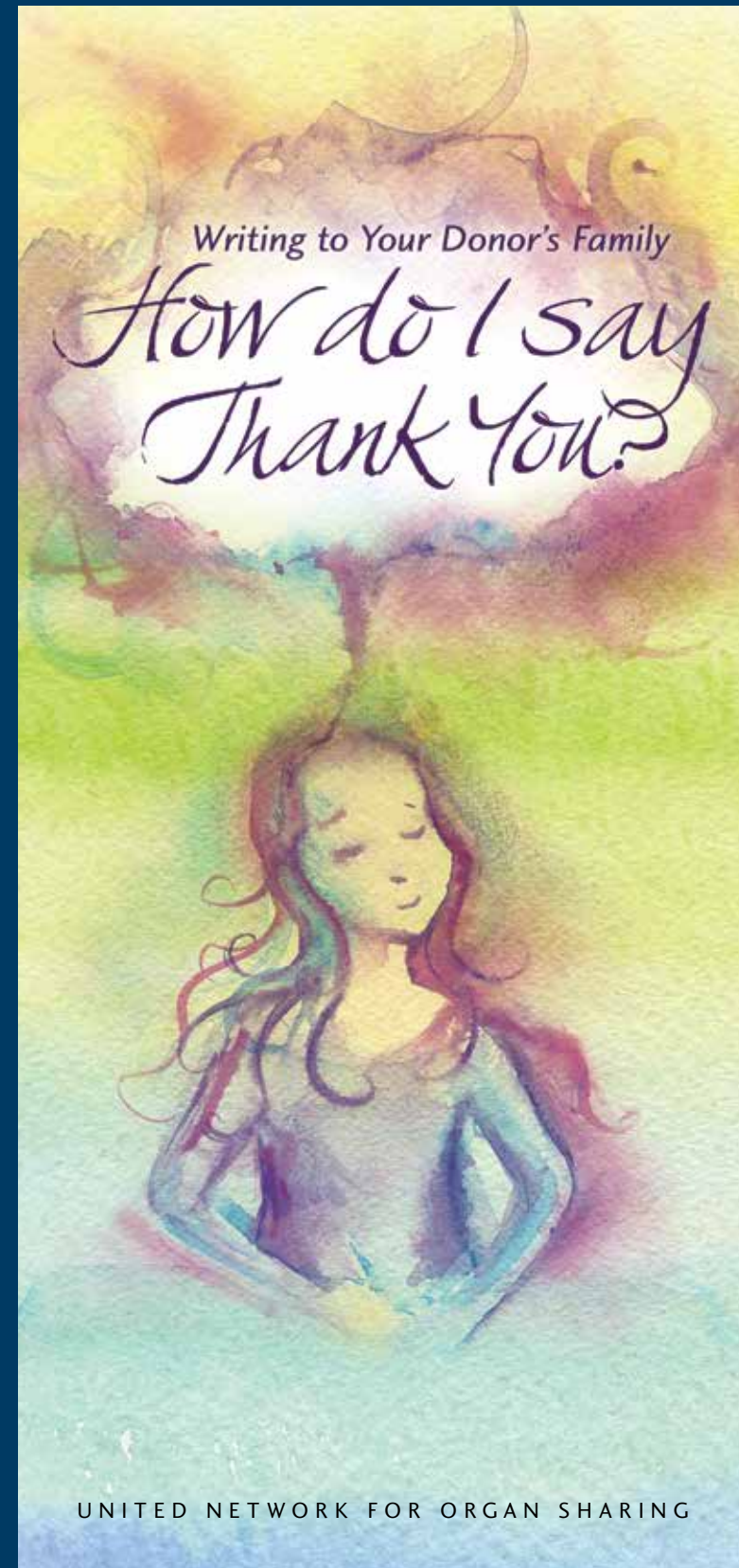
www.transplantliving.org
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P.O. Box 2484 | Richmond, VA 23218

www.unos.org



Getting Started

As a recipient, you probably feel grateful every day for your donor and his or her family.

To get started, call your transplant coordinator and explain that you want to write a note to your donor family.

Getting ready

- Find a card that is beautiful and peaceful
- Begin your note when you're feeling positive
- Write the note in your own handwriting
- Remember that your note is anonymous

What to avoid

- Any specific information about yourself (age, where you live) or your family
- The name of your surgeon or transplant center
- religion

Things you can include

- Awareness of the donor family's loss
- How grateful you are for their loved one's donation
- Something about yourself and your family (hobbies, interests)
- How long you were on the transplant waiting list

- The difference the transplant made (e.g., in how you feel, what you're now able to do)
- Life events you've seen after transplant (e.g., graduations, marriages, birth of children or grandchildren)

After you write

It's impossible to know if the donor family will reply to your letter. If the donor family does reply, the OPO will continue to forward your letters back and forth. If a day comes when both you and the donor family want to communicate directly, the OPO will guide you in that process.



Visit www.transplantliving.org > *community* > *patient resources* > *contacting your donor family* for more information.