

Loss & Living in the time of COVID 19

ADAPTING TO OUR NEW NORMAL

DEALING WITH LOSS

Surviving and thriving in this time, of a pandemic, is challenging for all of us. Learning how to adapt to our "new normal" can take some time and effort. We face the loss of many things

that made life happy, comfortable or at the least routine and now must find new ways to cope with the myriad changes around us.

Loss requires grief. Grief takes time to move to healing and

each person's grief process can be as different as the individual themselves, although some stages have been identified by psychologists as common to the grief process. Shock, anger, denial, depression, bargaining and acceptance can all attend someone who has lost a loved one, at different times in their process. Those who suffer losses of loved ones while the world undergoes the upheaval of COVID19, can have an even more difficult time with grief.

"You gain strength and courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself I have lived through this horror, I can take the next thing that comes along." - Eleanor Roosevelt

GRIEF IS A RIVER THAT
FLOWS TOWARDS
HEALING



The nature of support during grief may have changed, due to physical distancing and restrictions on gatherings and travel for example, that make the usual cultural expressions of and support during grief off-limits.

Added to this complication, is the fact that people face different types of grief.

Delayed grief – too much responsibility to find the time to grieve, so the process is pushed aside to occur at a later time, convenient or not.

Disenfranchised grief – grief that other people judge or minimize like suicides, abortions, substance use related death, or death of an elderly person, for example.



Some people deal with **grief that others don't see**, like miscarriages and may face their process alone.

So how does a grieving person make sense of the world around them, especially when the world around is so chaotic.

Allow yourself to grieve – loss requires processing. It is important to be patient with



yourself as you move through the difficulties. Try not to fight the process but experience it and keep moving forward.

Seek help – talk with a counsellor or someone you can trust, who is supportive, about the feelings you are having.

They can give you a listening ear, help to make sense of the feelings and stages and help you find the strength you need to keep moving forward.



Focus outwards –

sometimes focusing on the needs of others can ease some of your own pain or at least distract you from the pain for a while.

Accept – that numbness, pain, guilt and sadness are all feelings that are normal to the grieving process. Be gentle with yourself and the time it takes.

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Have faith – believe that you are resilient and that you will find a way that works for you to make it through this phase of life, as you have made it through others. This process can help you find out who you are, without your loved one but can also be a time to figure out how to love them, now that they are gone and importantly, how to love yourself.

Try movement – exercise can help release feel good chemicals in our brains. These endorphins can help naturally lift the heavy mood. Any kind of exercise and sunlight can be natural mood lifters that help with the difficult moments.

Celebrate – when you are ready, find your own way to remember and celebrate the one you lost. Your way, may only be meaningful for you and that is fine.

How can we help someone who is grieving?

Grief, I've learned, is really just love. It's all the love you want to give, but cannot. All that unspent love gathers up in the corners of your eyes, the lump in your throat and in that hollow part of your chest. Grief is just love with no place to go."

- Jamie Anderson

Understand that grief is very personal and don't judge the individual for the time or stage they are going through. Society may have expectations for how long grief lasts but the process is very individual. Understand that your time limit, is not theirs. Offer **help** if and in the way you can. Sometimes grief robs you of physical energy to accomplish even the most mundane tasks. Ask

what you can do to help.

Listen – to what this loss means to the person. Do not minimize their loss or tell them to not to cry. Crying can be cathartic and is a normal way to express sadness and loss.

Be present – whether by phone, email or other virtual device, as our new normal dictates, let them know they are not alone. Grief can be a very isolating process, as people struggle to find the right things to say and do, they may withdraw, not knowing what's best. Loneliness can increase depression. Try to be present for the person grieving in whatever way, or for as much time as you can.

