

Grief & COVID-19

Clarisa Anguiano, Grief Program Manager

How radically and quickly things are changing in our everyday lives and our world, in a way we would have never thought about only weeks ago. In the midst of life changes and personal loss, we are faced with the need to alter and change our daily lives even more. The COVID-19 pandemic has marked the “new normal” in our lives by additional loss and grief. Cancellations of special events, family gatherings, travel plans, etc., we may have looked forward to has now turned into an uncontrollable and uncertain future.

The disruptions in our daily routines and everyday life lead to the lingering feelings of sadness and unease. Not only are we mourning the loss of loved ones, but the support or touch of someone. Although physical distancing does not mean we still can't connect with others, it is not the same experience as in-person hugs, tears, and nods of understanding.

Although grief is most commonly associated with death, grief can also follow any types of loss.

Some examples that may cause grief as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic include:

- Fears for the future
- Loss of safety
- Financial anxiety
- Social distancing
- Worry of loved ones
- Special events, celebrations, plans being canceled
- Changes in daily routines
- Family members and different views of protection
- Sadness on how pandemic is affecting the world

COVID-19 can be more associated with **anticipatory grief**, which is a type of grief that occurs before a loss. If you are experiencing this type of grief you may have feelings of fear for the future and what will happen, anger, sadness over the approaching loss(es), and isolation.

If you lost a loved one to COVID-19 you may experience the following:

- Guilt- not being able to be there for support in your loved one's final moments
- Loss of Traditions- traditions or rituals may be limited or eliminated completely resulting in distress and additional loss

- Lack of Closure- social distancing from family members and inability to physically say goodbye to your loved one
- Isolation- physical distancing forces to grieve alone without basic human comforts

How can you cope:

Think: *body, brain, heart*

Body: What can you do to help your body? Physical activity such as stretching, jumping jacks, push-ups, etc. Make sure you are eating healthy, drinking enough water, and sleeping at least eight hours.

Brain: Limit media consumption and focus on supporting your nervous system instead such as meditation and taking deep breaths.

Heart: Make room for emotions that come up. Whatever you are feeling consider telling yourself “It is okay that I am feeling this way?”

Establish Routines:

Create new routines. Set a new schedule with small goals everyday. Consistency and routine can help feel a sense of control.

Reach out and stay connected:

Take advantage of technology. Schedule video chats or calls with friends and family. Explore social media pages, podcasts, and groups.

Make time for grief & the person who died:

Consider setting aside time to ask yourself: “How was your grief today” “What is helping the most?” “What should I avoid?”

Find Support

Our confidential emotional support line is available 24/7:

- 2-1-1
- 800-833-2900
- Texting HOPE to 20121

Stay up to date with current factual information can help ease any anxiety or stress about the situation:

- Text “coronavirus” or “covid19” to 211211
- If you are unable to text, call 2-1-1 or 800-833-2900