

Collective Grief & Loss



We are experiencing a lot of collective grief and loss in our communities and families right now due to COVID-19.

Many have lost loved ones, friends and co-workers and may have not been able to hold a memorial service for them. Major life events have been cancelled such as graduations, proms, celebrations, weddings, and conferences. As so many people are grieving it can be helpful to know what you and the people around you may be experiencing.

Grief is a normal and healthy response to loss of a friend, loved one, or major life change.

Phases of grief are not a linear or predictable process so often people will move back and forth between phases of grief.



Phases of Grief & Loss

Denial and shock - This is prominent during the hours and days following the loss. Common feelings during this time often include disbelief, emotional numbness, and a sense you are just “going through the motions.” People are often preoccupied with images and thoughts of their loved one or major life change.

How to Cope

- Hold a virtual or private memorial for your loved one or do something to mark the major change in your life.
- Ask your support system to share stories about your loved one or share what they are missing because of this change.
- You may want to take time off from your daily routine for a period of time.
- Take care of your basic needs- sleeping, eating, exercise

Feelings of separation - When the numbness and shock starts to wear off, usually people start to feel intense emotions of anger, sadness, despair, and anxiety for weeks or months. People start to face the loss of their loved one or major life change and cope with the losses it brings in their daily routine and life. During this time, people often intensely miss the presence of their loved one or the way their life used to be.

How to Cope

- Write down a memory of your loved one in place of the daily routine you had with them. For example, instead of taking a walk together or meeting for lunch, write down a favorite memory you have of doing those things together. You can keep these memories in the same place so over time you have a page full of memories.
- Find pictures of your loved one doing things you miss about them such as laughing or traveling together.
- Acknowledge your feelings and write down what has been lost in this major life change.
- Share your feelings with supportive friends/family or in a support group.

Phases of Grief & Loss



Disorganization - As you are feeling the separation from your loved one and the loss of your daily routine, many people feel a sense of disorganization in their life. Often people are easily distracted, feel restless, and have difficulty concentrating. People may feel anger or resentment when they see others with their loved ones or see people experiencing the life they hoped to have.

How to Cope

- Try to maintain your normal routine as much as possible.
- Video chat or call a supportive friend or family member when you would have spent time with your loved one, or talk with a supportive friend about your life change.
- Make a keepsake area or box with things that remind you of your loved one and put it in a special place you can visit to remember them or a time in your past that you miss before the change.
- Think of ways you can honor your loved ones life (volunteering your time to help others with the same illness or with grief, write a book, make a donation to their favorite organization).

Reorganization - When people start to find ways to name, remember, and honor their loved one or the major change in their life, they start to feel a sense of reorganization in their life and start to make meaning out of their loss.

How to Cope

- Attend a virtual support group to support others through the grief process.
 - Continue to remember and honor your loved one during important times of the year.
 - Think of ways you can still mark important life events such as holding a celebration in a different way and honor the loved ones who will miss this time.
 - Acknowledge what you have discovered about yourself in this loss and think of new goals and dreams you have to look forward to.
- 