



Coping With Grief and Loss During COVID-19

Grief is a natural response to losing someone or something important to you. The COVID-19 public health emergency changed the way people live and interact with others, including how they grieved their losses and coped with grief. COVID-19 precautions, such as social distancing and travel restrictions, can make grieving more difficult or even impossible. This, in turn, can make the loss more traumatic and the recovery more difficult. This document explains what to expect when experiencing grief, how to cope and where to find help.

Losses People Grieve

You may be grieving the loss of a person you loved, a family member, a friend, a colleague or a community figure you cared about. Certain things, such as not being able to be with your loved ones during their last days, observe religious rituals, attend funerals in person, visit your place of worship or spend time with others to help you cope, can make your loss even more traumatic.

Or, you may be grieving the loss of things important to you, such as the ways you used to live and work. You may have lost your daily routines that gave structure to your life, or the frequent interactions with family and friends in person. You may be grieving a financial loss, the loss of your job or business. Perhaps you are grieving having missed out on important events like graduations, birthdays and weddings.

During the public health emergency, almost everyone experienced a loss of a sense of safety and security. However, excessive policing, whether experienced firsthand or through the constant imagery of violence against Black individuals, violence against Asian individuals and continued systemic racism deepens this sense of loss for many members of the affected communities.

Grief Reactions

Grief is a natural and universal response to loss. However, each loss is unique, and everyone experiences grief differently. Race, ethnicity, culture and spiritual beliefs impact how people grieve.

There is no right or wrong way to grieve. As you go through the grieving process, you are likely to experience a variety of emotions and reactions which may change over time. They often include:

- Feeling empty, numb, angry or guilty
- Wondering if there is something that could or should have been done differently
- Experiencing physical reactions such as trembling, nausea, exhaustion and weakness
- Problems with eating and sleeping, including nightmares

- Avoiding people, and an inability to enjoy things you used to enjoy
- Problems with concentrating, remembering things and behaving absentmindedly
- Struggling to return to usual activities
- Loss of meaning, passing thoughts of suicide

Tips for Coping With Grief and Loss

- **Accept your feelings.** Recover at your own pace. Be patient with yourself.
- **Talk about your loss.** You may find this comforting and feel less alone. Connect with friends and family or support groups through phone, text and other digital platforms.
- **Do something that will lift your spirits.** Take a break and do something relaxing, energizing, or something that will lift your spirits to reduce your stress.
- **Take stock of what is going well.** Reflect on your strengths, write down or share with others the things that you managed successfully including bright moments from the day.
- **Focus on things within your control.** Establish and maintain a daily routine as it can help increase your sense of control over your life. Engage in activities that can keep you safe and healthy such as eating nutritious foods, exercising and establishing and keeping healthy sleeping habits.
- **Limit your exposure to media coverage related to COVID-19.** Getting updates is important but information overload can cause stress. Set a regular time for checking the news, but also to be offline when you shut down the TV, turn off the computer, put down your phone and newspapers.
- **Be part of the community.** Being isolated can prolong grieving and make it more difficult to cope. Being part of a community you identify with can help you feel a sense of belonging, offer you a network of support, and an opportunity to focus and help others.
- **Know what resources are available and ask for help if you feel overwhelmed.**

When to Seek Help

Grief is a natural reaction to significant loss and recovering is a process that can take some time. However, if the signs and symptoms you are experiencing related to your loss persist or worsen over time, you are unable to function and perform basic daily activities, you find yourself using drugs or alcohol to help you cope, or you are having thoughts of suicide, it is important that you reach out for help.

Where to Find Help

- **NYC WELL:** You can connect with trained counselors at NYC Well, a free and confidential mental health support service. NYC Well staff are available 24/7 and can provide brief counseling and referrals to care in over 200 languages. For support, call 888-NYC-WELL (888-692-9355), text "WELL" to 65173 or chat online by visiting nyc.gov/nycwell. NYC Well also offers wellbeing and emotional support applications (apps) that can help you cope, visit nyc.gov/nycwell and click on "App Library."
- **NY PROJECT HOPE:** NY Project Hope counselors can also help you cope with COVID-19. Call the Emotional Support Helpline at 844-863-9314 to be connected with crisis counseling services near you. You can also find educational resources, online wellness groups and more by visiting nyprojecthope.org.

Other COVID-19 Support Resources

- For support with food access, employment, health insurance, housing and more, visit nyc.gov/coronavirus and click on the “Resources for New Yorkers.”
- For additional resources related to COVID-19, visit nyc.gov/health/coronavirus and select the “Community Services” tab to view the [Comprehensive Resource Guide](#).
- For information on the COVID-19 vaccines, visit nyc.gov/covidvaccine. To find a location offering COVID-19 vaccinations, visit vaccinefinder.nyc.gov or call 877-VAX-4NYC (877-829-4692) to schedule an appointment at certain sites.
- For general information on COVID-19, visit nyc.gov/coronavirus or cdc.gov/covid19. For real-time updates, text “COVID” to 692-692. Message and data rates may apply.

The NYC Health Department may change recommendations as the situation evolves.

10.13.21