



Coping with Grief and Loss during the Pandemic

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Wellness points



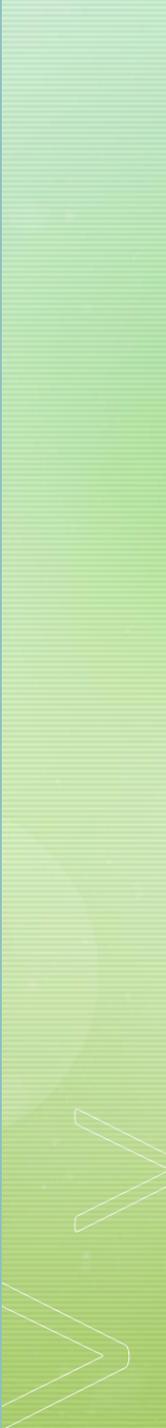
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Grief and Loss Defined

- Grief is an emotional reaction that follows the loss of someone or something of great value.
 - Mourning is the psychological process that occurs when you experience loss.
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Types of Losses during COVID-19

- Loss of a loved one through death
- Loss of job
- Loss of traditions i.e. birthday celebrations, vacations, graduations etc.
- Loss of social contact through social distancing
- Loss of safety
- Loss of certain routines and habits, loss of normalcy
- Financial loss

Anticipatory Grief

- Anticipatory grief is a type of grief that occurs before a loss, often after a person has a prolonged illness. The person who is ill and their family and friends may experience a period of grief as they emotionally prepare for the inevitable death.
- People who are experiencing this type of grief can feel sadness over the impending loss, fear of what will happen, anger over the situation, and feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Communal Grief and Loss

- Sherry Cormier, PhD, a psychologist who specializes in grief and grief mentoring. “It’s important that we start recognizing that we’re in the middle of this collective grief. We are all losing something now.”
- Cormier says. “There is a communal grief as we watch our work, health-care, education and economic systems — all of these systems we depend on — destabilize,” she says.

Communal Grief and Loss Cont'd

- The crisis isn't just shaking our faith in those systems. It's upending our understanding of the world around us, says Robert Neimeyer, PhD, director of the Portland Institute for Loss and Transition and professor emeritus of psychology at the University of Memphis. "The losses include our sense of predictability, control, justice, and the belief that we can protect our children or elderly loved ones," he says.

Common Emotional Responses to Grief

- Shock: disbelief at what happened, feeling numb as if things are unreal
- Fear: of one's own mortality, for the safety of oneself or one's family
- Anger: at the injustice or senselessness of it all, generalized anger and irritability
- Sadness: flash backs to previous grief and loss, feeling depressed, about the loss of feeling safe or secure
- Guilt: for not doing what you felt might have made a difference, for not behaving as you would have liked.

Common Physical Responses

- Sleep: difficulty getting off to sleep because of intrusive thoughts, restless and disturbed sleep, feeling tired and fatigued.
- Physical problems: general agitation and muscle tension, headaches and general aches and pains, feeling generally unwell, other physical signs and symptoms



Cognitive Responses

- Memories: frequent thoughts or images of the person, flashbacks or feelings of “reliving” past grief and loss experiences, attempts to shut out painful memories.
 - Dreams: dreams and nightmares about what happened, unpleasant dreams of other frightening thoughts.
 - Confusion: difficulty making simple decisions, inability to concentrate and memory problems, not being able to express yourself fluently verbally
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Common Behavioral Responses

- Social: feelings of detachment from others, loss of interest in normal activities and hobbies, easily irritated by other people, withdrawal from others.
- Work: poor motivation, not wanting to go to work, poor concentration and attention, sense of lost purpose in your work
- Habits: increased use of alcohol, cigarettes or other drugs, loss of appetite or increased eating, loss of interest in enjoyable activities



Stages of Grief by William Worden

Stage 1- Shock and Disbelief

- Events seem unreal
- Denial of the loss
- Crying
- Anger
- Screaming
- Feeling of numbness

Stage 2- Developing Awareness

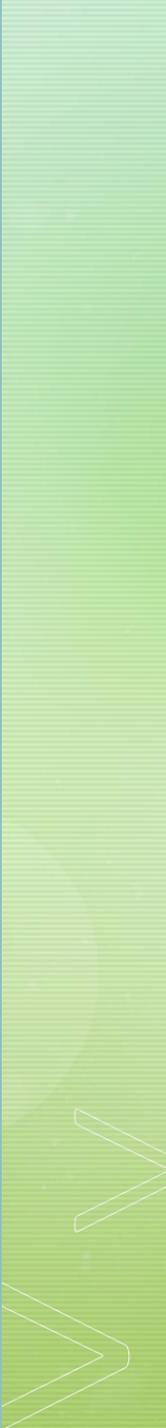
- Duration of 3-12 months
- Preoccupation with the loss
- Anxiety
- Restlessness
- Difficulty Sleeping

Possible Characteristics of Stage 2

- Loss of Appetite
- Digestive problems
- Fatigue
- Anger
- Guilt



Stage 2 Cont'd

- A depressive response on the anniversary of the loss
 - A clearer awareness of the loss
 - Recognition of the consequences of the loss
 - Mood swings
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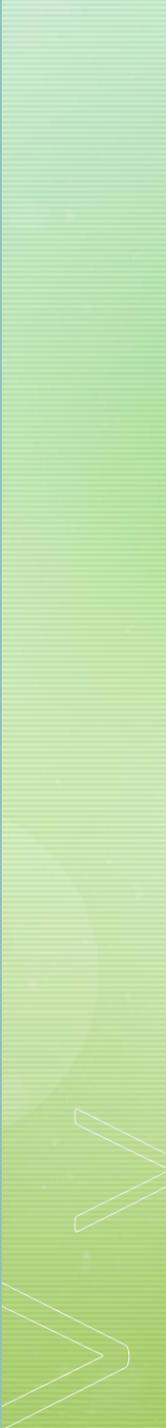
Good News about Stage 2

- Although long in duration you should gradually feel better month by month.





Stage 3- Resolution

- From 3 to 12 months after the loss
 - Incorporation of new habits
 - Lifestyle changes
 - Making wise plans for the future
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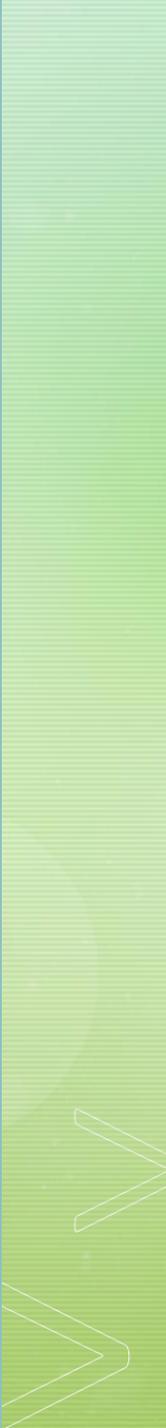
The Good News about Stage 3

- You gradually take charge of your life and resolve the loss, through activity, readjustment, and education.





Healthy Grieving

- Not something we experience naturally
 - Worden conceptualizes the grief process as work to do
 - Tasks imply that there is something to do
 - This can be empowering to the mourner who feels so helpless
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Time does not always heal
“wounds” but working
through them over time
can.

Healthy Grieving

Worden's Task of Mourning

- Task I: To Accept the Reality of the Loss-
- This involves emotional and intellectual acceptance of the finality of the loss.
- Communicate about the loss
- Have a mourning ritual

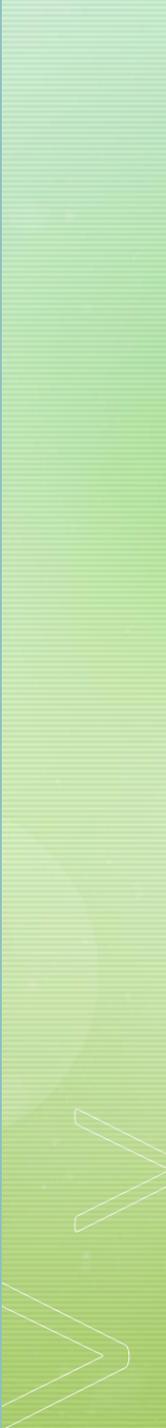
Task II- Work Through the Pain

Avoiding or suppressing the pain can result in symptoms such as depression, heart disease, stomach problems, and headaches

Others turn to the unhealthy use of alcohol or drugs to work through the pain. Society as a whole is uncomfortable with the painful feelings and may give the message “you don’t have to grieve”. Adequate completion of this task is necessary



Task II Cont'd

- Write about the loss
 - Be honest about how you feel
 - Do not avoid the pain
 - Self-care is important including adequate sleep, balanced nutrition and exercise
 - Maintain Social ties
 - Maintain Spiritual ties
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Working through the pain

- Use the opportunity to develop more patience
- “capacity to endure hardship, difficulty or inconvenience without complaint. (Roget’s)
- “The power of suffering with fortitude, uncomplaining endurance of evil’s or wrongs, as toil, pain, poverty, insult, oppression, calamity, etc.” (American Heritage Dictionary)

Task III- Adjust to Environment with the Loss

- Adjusting to a new environment is defined differently for different people.
- Don't make lifechanging decisions
- Identify the roles that the lost person or thing played in your life
- Find how these functions can be met now

Task IV- Emotionally Relocate the Loss

- People who reinvest their emotions into living their lives, feel more hopeful and adjust to new roles, have completed the mourning process.
- This does not mean the loss is forgotten about, reminiscing helps
- Build on current and new relationships
- Develop new routines
- Find new interest and continue old ones

Task V- To Grow from the Loss

- Do not settle for surviving only
- Honor the lost person or thing by growing from the pain
- Reflect on what you have learned through the loss
- Let life become more meaningful
- Have you grown from loss? What are some ways you can grow from loss?

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Contact us!

If you need assistance or want additional information about this topic or how your EAP can help, please contact Moore Counseling & Mediation Services, Inc. Employee Assistance Program at:

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