

Grief during COVID-19

Coping with loss typically brings on feelings of loneliness and isolation under normal circumstances. During this time of physical distancing, grief can be intensified.

We are all more acutely aware of death now, yet our ability to grieve is being challenged. This pandemic has claimed thousands of lives, in addition to the losses which would have occurred without it. During this time, many people have lost loved ones to accidents, crime, and other health-related conditions.

The years of grief research have helped professionals to understand that there are stages to grief, including denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. However, the stages are not linear, and there is no expected timeline for individual grief. It is important to allow yourself the time to acknowledge your feelings as you experience them. It is healthy to experience grief in waves and accept that your feelings may change from hour to hour and day to day.

The typical rites and rituals that are associated with death and burial are not possible during this time of physical distancing. In the face of this adversity, we can still expect grief stages to occur, although they may be delayed or experienced in a different manner than anticipated. There is greater likelihood that denial will occur as families and friends are unable to gather to grieve. You may feel resentment or even anger that authorities are preventing a proper funeral or burial. The restrictions of gatherings and the precautions we need to take also mean that what people need most during grief, connection and community, is unavailable.

There are options available to help those in mourning to honor their loved one and to aid in their own grief process. Many funeral homes are offering online viewings, cremation, and services so that loved ones near and far can watch together. There are also online grief support groups available in many formats. Families may choose to engage



in an online chat together every few days, so that they may see each other's face, share stories, and support each other. There are video conferences of families and friends cooking their loved one's recipes together or sharing in their favorite card or board game. Some families and friends have begun other types of online memorials to honor a loved one. One group started a webpage, and another shared a Google Doc to post memories, stories, pictures, and comments to grieve together. Other families are sharing ideas and planning memorial services for a time when social distancing restrictions have been lifted.

The current situation has shifted how we grieve, but we are finding new and creative ways to share the experience and honor loved ones. Remember that you can also call Carebridge for grief support 24 hours a day at 800-437-0911.

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