

Surviving Grief in the time of COVID-19

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Are you cut off from the people and activities that were helping you to cope with your grief?

Are you feeling more alone as those around you struggle with their own experiences of loss and uncertainty?

The impacts of the COVID-19 crisis are making it harder to manage grief after a bereavement. Having routines disrupted, being kept indoors, and seeing people less can increase emotions that were already hard to cope with.

In ordinary times, people experiencing bereavement told us they often felt isolated in their grief. This sense of aloneness is heightened in this time of COVID-19 as even the most supportive family and friends are occupied by their own anxiety and grief. On top of all of this, you may be impacted by extra stresses, such as loss of work and living with the uncertainty around the possibility of more loss.

During these challenging times it's important to have strategies to help us to cope as well as possible.

Below are a few suggestions that may help:

- 1. Maintain a schedule.** When the world is feeling chaotic, maintaining routine can help us to feel more secure. Having a daily schedule allows us to prioritise the things we know help our mental health and wellbeing. Your daily routine might include time for exercise, meditation, regular mealtimes, work or other projects to keep you busy and offer focus. Write down your routine at the start of the day or week and do your best to stick to it - share it with someone else if you want extra encouragement.

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2. Honour your grief. An important part of your schedule may be taking time to remember and connect with the person you are grieving. This may involve talking to that person, writing them a letter, looking at photographs, playing music, lighting a candle or sitting in a particular part of the house or garden. The balance between honouring your grief and keeping busy and distracted will be different for everyone. It will be important to find the right balance for you in your new schedule.

3. Keep connected. Maintaining relationships with others will be particularly important at this time of physical isolation. Creating daily habits involving social contact can help this to feel less like an effort. For example, you could choose to call someone different each day at a particular time. Or arrange with friends or relatives a time to check in once a week so you have one friend scheduled on a Monday, another on a Tuesday and so on.

4. Be self-compassionate. Chances are we're supportive when someone else is in pain, but less likely to offer ourselves compassion - even when we're grieving. Being kind to ourselves increases resilience and reduces anxiety and depression, making it an important step in coping with grief. One way we can do this is by paying attention to our self-critical thoughts and trying to see them through a more understanding and less judgemental lens. By reminding ourselves that we are all imperfect and that we're experiencing pain, we can choose to be kind to ourselves, in the same way we do for those we love.

If you need additional support please contact:

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