



**Medical  
Blueprints**

## **COVID-19 GRIEF: 4 STEPS TO YOUR NEW NORMAL REPORT #2749**

**BACKGROUND:** Grief is considered a natural and painful emotional reaction to loss. Some causes of grief are passing of a human life, divorce, loss of health and function, loss of independence, or loss of a pet. Feelings of grief include love, sadness, fear, anger, relief, compassion, hate, or even happiness. These feelings can be long-lasting. More than 57% of Americans reported experiencing a major loss over the last three years. In all, 32% experienced the loss of a family member or close friend, 20% experienced the death of a pet, 3% experienced the loss of a spouse or partner, and 2% experienced the loss of a child. About 65% of Americans going through intense grieving experience some sort of physical ailment, or a combination of multiple ones. Some physical symptoms are fatigue, loss of appetite, headaches, heart palpitations, or even aches and pains. Some experience mental health symptoms like sadness, depression, sleep disturbance, anxiety, or suicidal thoughts.

(Source: [https://www.cdss.ca.gov/agedblinddisabled/res/VPTC2/4%20Care%20for%20the%20Caregiver/Some\\_Facts\\_about\\_Grief.pdf](https://www.cdss.ca.gov/agedblinddisabled/res/VPTC2/4%20Care%20for%20the%20Caregiver/Some_Facts_about_Grief.pdf) and <https://eterneva.com/resources/coping-with-loss>)

**IT'S OK TO GRIEVE:** As the coronavirus covers the globe, it has left many anxious about life and death issues. It's also left people struggling with a host of existential losses as they heed stay-at-home warnings and wonder how bad all of this will get. "It feels like a free-fall," says Francis Weller, a California psychotherapist. "What we once held as solid is no longer something we can rely upon." To get through these uncertain times, it's important to acknowledge and grieve lost routines, social connections, family structures, and our sense of security. We can then create new ways to move forward. "Grief left unrecognized and unattended can negatively impact every aspect of our being: physically, cognitively, emotionally, and spiritually," says Sonya Lott, a Philadelphia-based psychologist specializing in grief counseling. It's important to honor our own losses even if those losses seem small compared to others. "We can't heal what we don't have an awareness of," says Lott.

(Source: <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/03/26/820304899/coronavirus-has-upended-our-world-its-ok-to-grieve>)

**HONORING YOUR GRIEF:** Once you identify the reasons for your grief, you can begin to work on overcoming it in several ways. "If you can't talk about what happened to you and you can't share it, you can't really start working on it," interfaith chaplain and trauma counselor, Terri Daniel says. Communicating with your friends and family about your experience is one way. It can be as simple as picking up the phone and calling a friend or family member, or, using apps like Zoom, Skype, or Facetime. Virtual meetups are easy to set up on a daily or weekly basis. Keeping a written or recorded journal offers another way to express, to identify and to acknowledge loss and grief. Art therapy can be especially helpful for children unable to express well with words, for teens and even for many adults. "Regular meditation and just taking time to slow down and take several deep, calming breaths throughout the day also works to lower stress and is available to everyone," says Lott. Finally, make sure to let joy and gratitude into your life during these challenging times. Psychologist, Mindy Cassel says, "We all benefit from finding that which we are grateful for. Checking in every few days to remind ourselves that some things are still good in our lives, from small pleasures like foods we enjoy, or a beautiful sunset, to appreciating the people we love and recognizing the good things they are doing despite the risks to do so. Being thankful helps us focus on the good in life and inspires us to be more positive."

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