Grief Reactions to COVID-19


What you might be grieving right now

- Loss of safety, stability, or a sense of normalcy
- Inability to be physically close to loved ones, loss of social connection
- Cancellation of celebrations, trips, and events
- Loss of autonomy

Recognize that your emotions might mirror the stages of grief.

- Denial: This virus won’t affect me.
- Anger: You’re making me leave campus and taking away my sports and activities.
- Bargaining: Okay, if I social distance for two weeks, can everything go back to normal?
- Sadness: I have no idea when this will end.
- Acceptance: This is the situation. I have to figure out how I want to move forward. I can wash my hands according to CDC guidelines. I can adhere to the rules of social distancing. I can adjust to my classes being online.

Just like the stages of grief...

- Your grief is not a linear process.
  - It’s not as though you clear a level, and you’ll never return to it again.
  - The stages don’t necessarily occur in order for some people.
- Not everyone experiences each of the stages, and a person can move back and forth between them.

How to manage your grief

- Find comfort in knowing that we are grieving collectively. You are not alone in your grief.
- Recognize and let go of what you can’t control.
  - What you can control
    - Your own social distancing
    - Following CDC recommendations
    - Limiting your exposure to the news and social media
    - Finding activities to do at home apart from work
    - Maintaining social relationships through technology
  - What you cannot control
    - If others follow the rules of social distancing
    - Predicting what will happen
    - What is available at the store
- How long the pandemic will last
- Stay in the present moment by meditating, practicing mindfulness, or engaging in deep breathing exercises.
  - We experience anticipatory grief when we imagine the worst-case scenario occurring.
- Be kind to yourself and to others.
  - This is an unprecedented moment in modern history. Experience whatever emotions you’re feeling with compassion and without judgment. We are all in uncharted territory together.