

Grief & Loss During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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#keepconnected



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale

100 years of community
ans dans la communauté

Disruptions to Traditional ‘Rites of Passage’

COVID-19 and How it can Impact Mental Health

- Increased anxiety
- Stress
- Excessively checking for symptoms
- Feeling irritable
- Insecurity
- Normal aches may make you feel like you have COVID-19
- Sleeping troubles
- Feelings of helplessness

What We May See

- Loss of Routine or Motivation
- Feeling Overwhelmed, Increased Distress
 - Reduced Self-Care
- Viewing World and/or Self Through a Negative Lens
- Isolating and/or Withdrawing

“Pandemic fatigue occurs when something we thought was going to be short-lived, is now a more chronic or longer-term situation than expected.”

Dr. Karen Wang, youth psychiatrist.

Reoccurring Thinking Patterns During COVID

Unhelpful Thinking Patterns

- Mind reading.
- **Fortune-telling**
- **Catastrophizing**
- Discounting positives
- **Negative filtering.**
 - Should
- **Unfair comparisons**
- What if

Racing Thoughts

- Identify the thought that is causing anxiety or distress
- Ask your self how much do I believe the thought
- Fact checking
 - How do I know this is true?
 - What is the evidence against it?
 - Have I had experienced this thought before
 - What did I do in the past? How did I manage it?

Grief & Loss During the Pandemic

We work through grief, we don't just get over it.

Grief is the internal meaning associated with death consisting of feelings, thoughts and images.

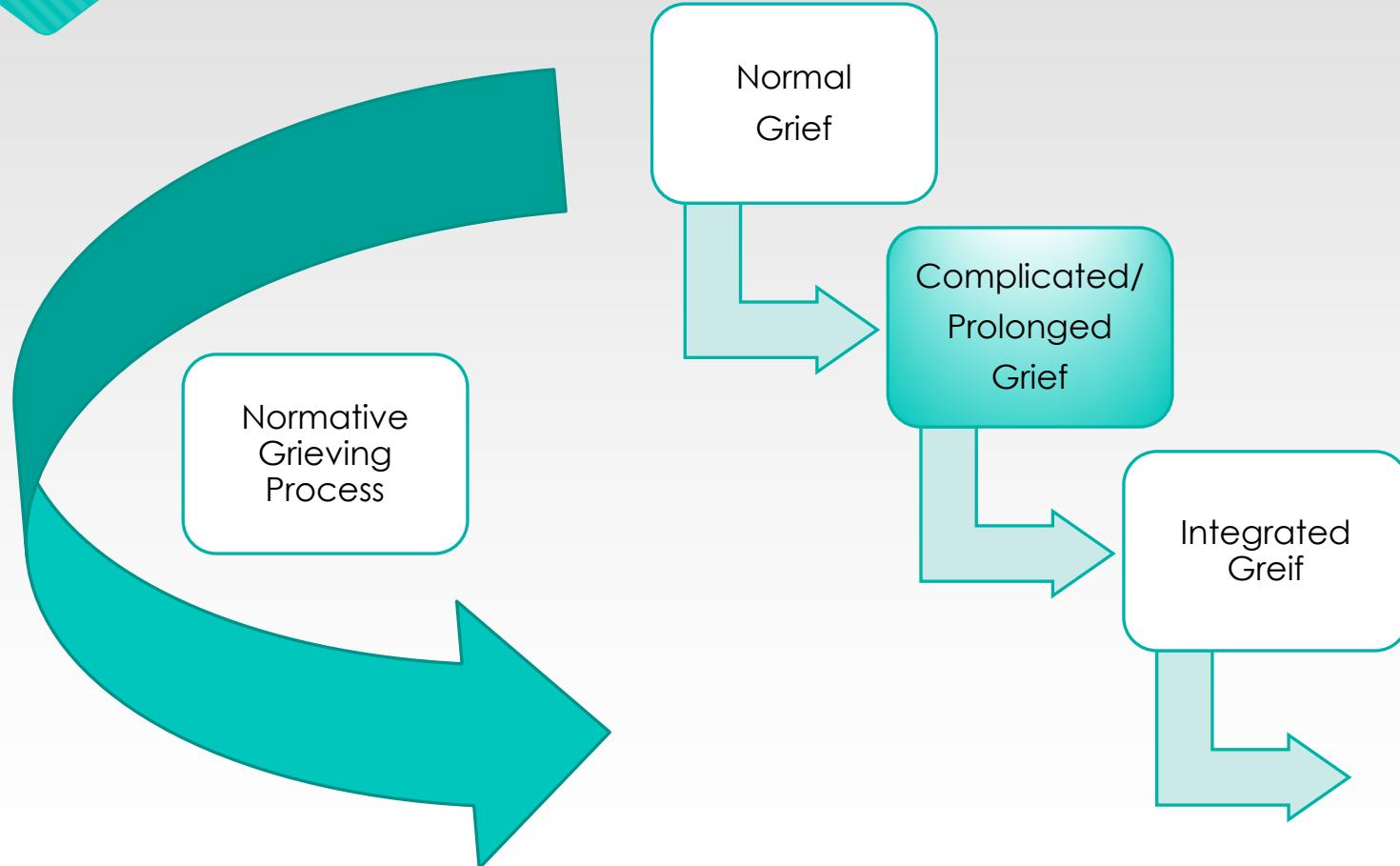
Mourning is the outward expression of grief; “grief gone public”

Dr. Allen Wolfelt

Acknowledge Without Judgment

- Shared acknowledgement
 - Of death or loss
 - Acknowledging emotional reactions
- Shared experience
 - If there is not a specific shared experience, how can we see another's person perspective
- Reorganization
 - Of our environments and routines – making needed changes to support self and others
- Reinvestment
 - In other relationships and life pursuits

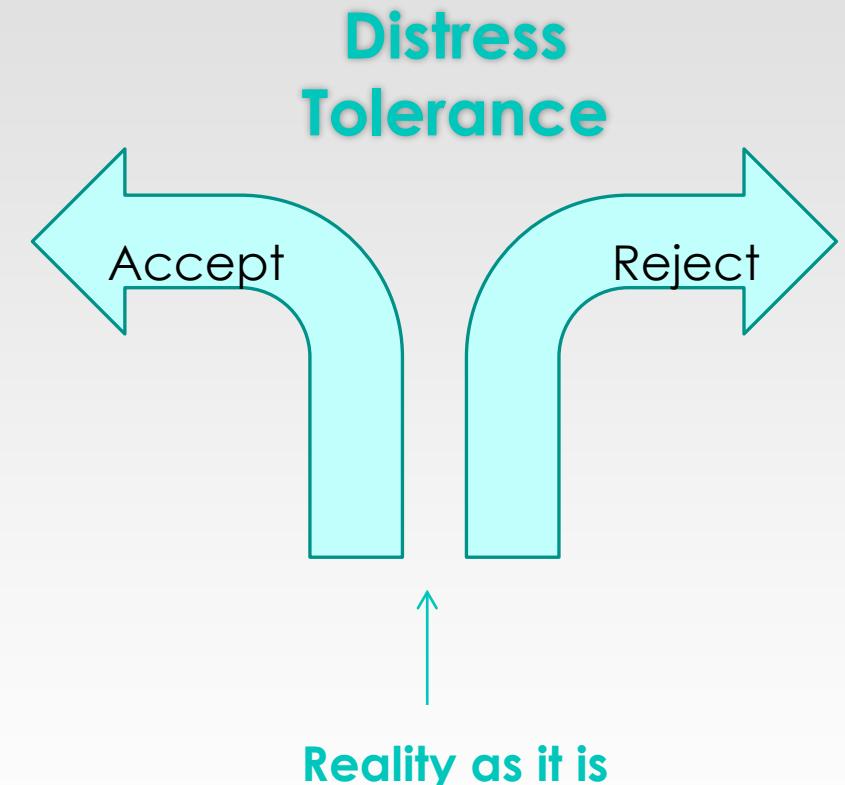
Grief & How it may Impact You



Coping with Grief & Loss

- Feel what you feel
- Do not bury feelings
- Accepting the hurt of painful memories
- Make rest and self care a priority – make time to recognize the value of this
- Have signs of life around you: plants, pets, people
- Avoid major decisions for the first 6 months to one year (if you can)
- Be patient with yourself and others
- Make plans to acknowledge significant days
- **Trust yourself**

Pragmatic Steps Moving Forward.



Coping Strategies

Personalize, Adapt and Review Effectiveness

- Breathing exercises
- Grounding using the 5 senses
- Acknowledge thoughts without judgement
- Active problem solving
- **Give yourself time**
- Setting healthy boundaries
- Physical activity is key
- Go out into nature and get some air
- Keep yourself busy
- Keep your brain challenged
- Limit your media diet
- **Stay connected**
- Connect with family and friends
- Check in
- Seek support

Mental Health Research Canada

APRIL 30, 2020

- Feelings of depression are rising steadily
- The most negative impacts on mental health reported Canadians was concerns over a family member becoming infected, job loss and economic anxiety.
- The most positive impacts on mental health cited by Canadians were pets, communicating with those outside your household, and reading.

May 19, 2020

- Ontario reported an increase in anxiety.
- Increase in the consumption of alcohol
- Positive impact mental health from in-person interactions with family members.
- Urban residents feeling supported by their employers
- Mental health is negatively impacted by job loss.
- Increased concern is economic downturn

Mental Health Research Canada

October 1, 2020

- Teachers experiencing high levels of anxiety
- High levels of anxiety and depression remained steady
- Previous activities cited as having the most positive impact on mental health reported as no longer effective.
- ½ of those who accessed mental health services before the pandemic are no longer accessing services

November 18, 2020

- Spending time outside is having a more positive effect on their mental health than any other activity
- people (ages 18 to 34), healthcare workers, and those who indicated that they are not following COVID-19 report high levels of anxiety and depression.
- Levels of anxiety and depression rates remain high but stable.
- Those not following COVID-19 regulations report a high degree of anxiety and depression

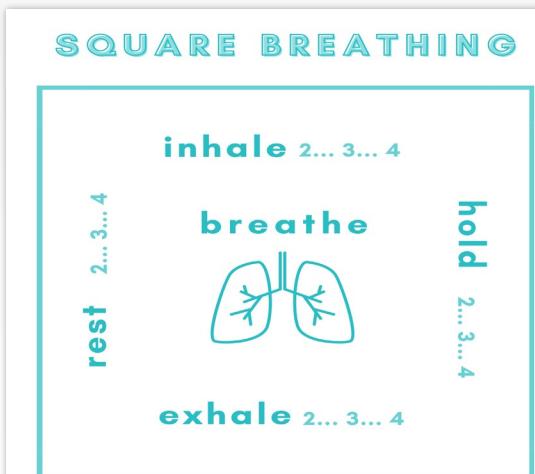
Mental Health Research Canada

January 14, 2021

- Canadians reporting highest levels of anxiety and depression.
- Most are optimistic that they will recover once the pandemic is over.
- Frontline healthcare workers report high levels of anxiety, diagnosis of anxiety and high levels of accessing treatment for anxiety.
- Social isolation and working from home are having more of a negative impact on mental health as the pandemic continues and as guidelines restricting movement are in place.

Coping Strategies in the Moment

- Breathing exercises
- Grounding using the 5 senses
- Progressive muscle relaxation



Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Whole Body Script

