

What is Grief and Mourning?

Grief is the full range of emotions, thoughts and experiences we endure when someone we love dies. It is important to recognize that this may entail a wide variety of emotions and experiences. Grief may trigger responses that are physical, mental, behavioral, emotional or spiritual in nature.

What is Anticipatory Grief?

Anticipatory grief is grief which occurs prior to the death. Grief begins when our loved one, or we ourselves, receive a diagnosis and/or face a situation which could result in death.

What is Bereavement?

Bereavement is the state of grief and the name for the time period spent mourning after a loss (loss in this case referring specifically to the loss of a loved one).

Where to Turn When a Loved One Dies

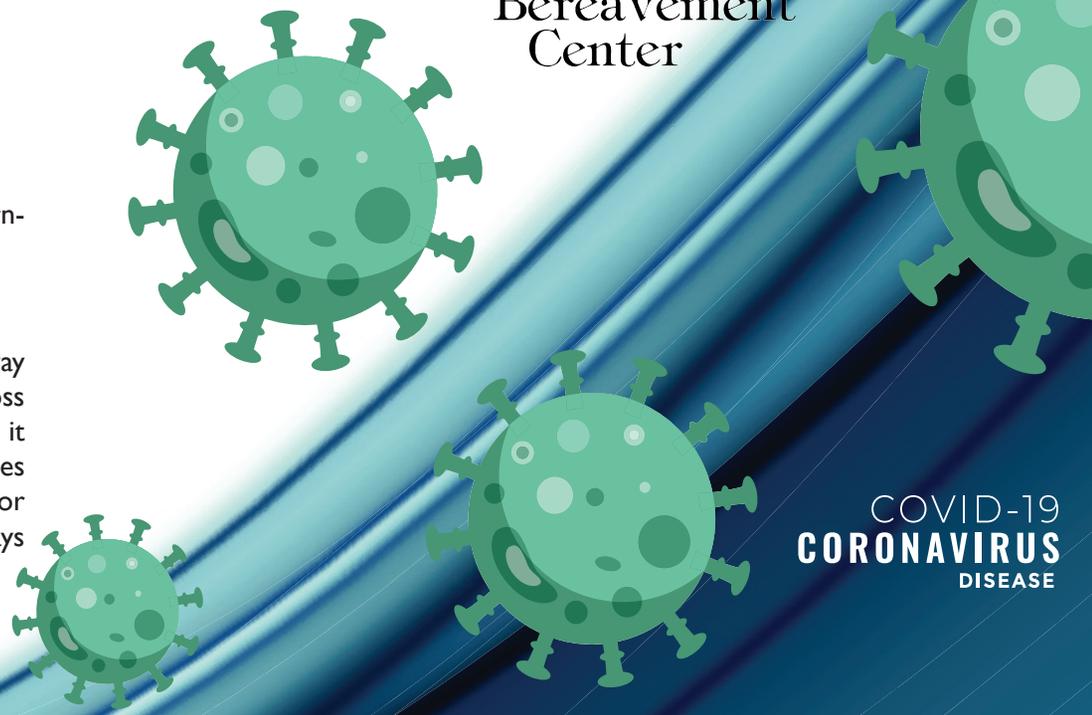
The people in your life whom know you best and care for you can go a long way in providing support during such a difficult time. Every individual experiences loss in their own way and has their own idea of what support looks like. Therefore, it becomes important to tell them how they can help to support you. Some examples of how support can be provided include regular "check-ins" via phone, Facetime or Zoom. During this time of self-quarantine and social distancing, we need to find ways to be creative to get or give the support we need.

Professional support may be beneficial during this time. Consider joining our Coping With Loss Support Groups via Zoom or take advantage of our one-on-one distance counseling. Our group schedule can be found on our website as well as links to connect to other groups throughout the state of New Jersey. In the event you cannot access our online resources, please contact our Bereavement Center to speak with our staff (973-948-2283).

Atlantic Health System has also organized a Corona Virus Grief and Loss Support Group via Zoom. This group is held on Wednesdays from 12:00-1:00 PM. To register and gain access to this support, please contact a Social Worker by calling 862-260-3199 and press option #3. You will need to provide an e-mail address to receive the Zoom meeting invitation.

The most important thing to remember during this time is to be compassionate toward yourself and your loved ones. Losing someone you love can change your entire world. This may be especially true now that COVID-19 is impacting so many areas of our lives and society. **Please know you do not have to walk this road alone.**

Joseph T.
Quinlan
Bereavement
Center



COVID-19
CORONAVIRUS
DISEASE

Facing and/or experiencing the death of a loved one can be one of the heaviest weights we bear. The current COVID-19 pandemic may be creating an even heavier burden as we navigate this unprecedented situation.

It is our hope that you find something here which will resonate with you and be helpful as you support yourself and your loved ones during this difficult time. Please read this in small doses or all at once, as you feel able.

This is your time to do what's best for you.
Please know that you don't have to walk this road alone.

A Bereavement Awareness and Support Community (BAASC) Initiative Component

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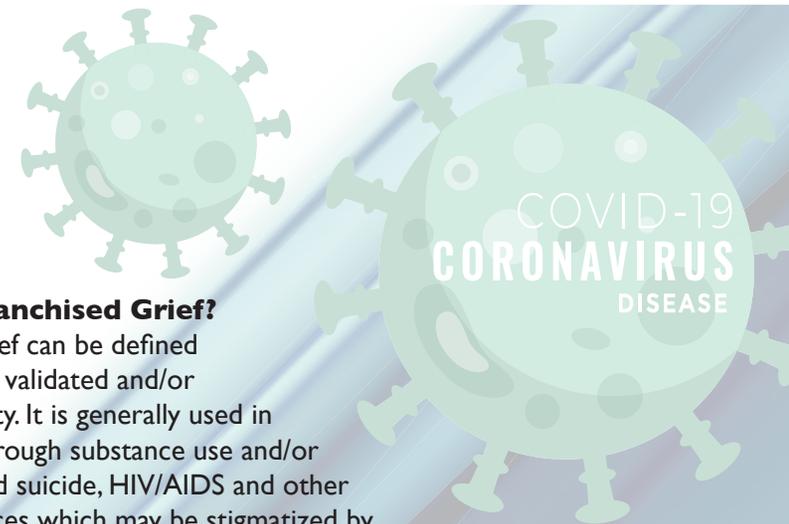
What are the implications of the COVID-19 Pandemic on End-of-life, Anticipatory Grief and Bereavement?

Increased isolation – Chronic illness, end-of-life, anticipatory grief and bereavement are times when many individuals may feel very isolated, either emotionally and/or physically. It can feel as though we are alone or that no one else could understand our grief and the impact of these losses. These are the moments when spending time with our loved ones can be most important. The changes in visitation policies and protocols at medical care facilities and social distancing guidelines can significantly impact our ability to get support and be with those we love.

Concerns surrounding safety of self and others – When we are grieving, facing the loss of someone we love, or receive a diagnosis ourselves, we may become more aware of our mortality. It is not unusual to begin to worry about the people we love becoming ill and/or being concerned about our own health. The current pandemic may serve to increase our concerns surrounding the well-being of ourselves and loved ones. If we are in a situation which requires us to be in close proximity to our loved one, such as acting as a caregiver or helping them meet daily needs, we may become concerned we could contract the virus and/or “infect” our loved one. These concerns may add stress and additional tasks (i.e. acquisition of personal protection equipment, additional sanitation of common surfaces, etc.) to an already demanding situation.

Interruption in meaningful rituals – Connecting with, and honoring those we love through memorial services and celebrations of life, religious rites and other spiritual practices may be central to our grief experience. They are opportunities to share our love and our loss together. This current pandemic has impacted our ability to hold these very important gatherings. Delaying the opportunity to honor our loved one(s) in these ways can interrupt the process of connection and comfort and can add to our feelings of isolation, disconnection, disempowerment and uncertainty.

Barriers to and/or reduced access to community resources and services – There are many services and resources which play a significant role in end-of-life and bereavement. In addition to the medical, spiritual and aftercare supports which may be involved, there may be legal, financial and other estate concerns which need attention (i.e. utility accounts such as electricity, telephone services, legal licensure, etc.). Community resources such as counseling services, peer support groups, social service offices, surrogate and governmental offices, and other types of resources which help navigate these difficult processes may be limited to digital and/or phone support and/or have reduced hours and staff. These limitations may make an already lengthy and stressful process more difficult.



What is Disenfranchised Grief?

Disenfranchised Grief can be defined as grief which is not validated and/or recognized by society. It is generally used in reference to loss through substance use and/or overdose, completed suicide, HIV/AIDS and other types of circumstances which may be stigmatized by broader society. This general stigma may impact the bereaved individual's ability to experience and/or share their grief in public and/or with those they love. It is the “separateness” and “isolation” that makes grief “disenfranchised,” not necessarily the cause of that distance. This disconnection may take away a very important component of grief support: the love, encouragement and validation from a world which acknowledges the loss occurred. It is this acknowledgment that allows the bereaved individual to feel less alone. Due to this pandemic, loss and grief during this time may become disenfranchised due to our inability to be with our loved one(s) during end-of-life and bereavement, and our inability to engage in memorial services, celebrations of life, and other meaningful rituals together.

Staying connected while remaining “socially distant”

To be connected with a loved one is more than simply being near them. While physical presence is one of the most powerful aspects of the experience of a relationship, it is the feelings associated with being present that creates this valuable “connection.” We can be made to feel close with someone by interacting in other ways if we are unable to be physically present. A simple example is speaking to someone on the telephone. We may not feel as connected with them over the telephone as we do in person, but we are able to experience the relationship through sharing that time together. We would encourage you to be creative in finding ways to stay connected while staying socially distant. Write letters to each other exploring your lives now and relationships with your loved one. Draw a picture or make a mixed tape with songs that “speak” about your love and/or grief surrounding your loved one and share it with those who also love them. Spend time making a memory book to reflect on your experiences with your loved one. When possible, take advantage of the technology such as social networking, video-chatting, and other resources that allow us to remain connected. While none of these engagements may be equal to being physically present, they may allow us to remain as connected as possible while keeping ourselves and our loved ones safe.