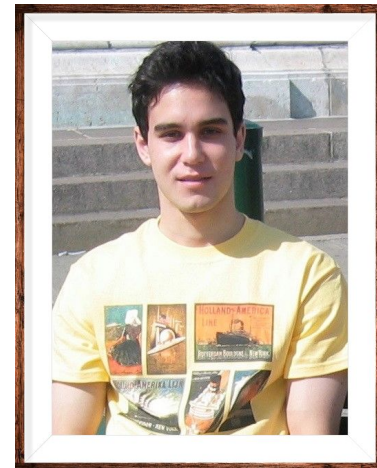




We Reached Our Goal!

A Generous Donation in Memory of Their Beloved Son, Eric

A special thank-you to **Bruce and Ellie Lederman** for their generous donation in memory of Eric. Bruce and Ellie wrote a check for the difference between what we raised and our fundraising goal. They took us to the finish line!



Coronavirus Has Upended Our World. It's OK to Grieve.

by Stephanie O'Neill for NPR

On weekday evenings, sisters Lesley Laine and Lisa Ingle stage online happy hours from the Southern California home they share. It's something they've been enjoying with local and faraway friends during this period of social distancing and self-isolation. And on a recent evening, I shared a toast with them.

"Grief is not a problem to be solved," he says. "It's a presence in the psyche awaiting, witnessing."

We laughed and had fun during our half-hour Facetime meetup. But unlike our pre-pandemic visits, we now worried out loud about a lot of things – like our millennial-aged kids: their health and jobs. And what about the fragile elders, the economy? Will life ever return to "normal?" "It feels like a free-fall," says Francis Weller, a Santa Rosa, California psychotherapist. "What we once held as solid is no longer something we can rely upon."



The coronavirus pandemic sweeping the globe has not only left many anxious about life and death issues, it's also left people struggling with a host of less obvious, existential losses as they heed stay-home warnings and wonder how bad all of this is going to get.

"It's important to honor our own losses, even if those losses seem small compared to others."

"To weather these uncertain times, it's important to acknowledge and grieve lost routines, social connections, family structures and our sense of security, and then create new ways to move forward," says interfaith chaplain and trauma counselor, Terri Daniel.

"We need to recognize that mixed in with all the feelings we're having of anger, disappointment, perhaps rage, blame and powerlessness is grief," says Daniel, who works with the dying and bereaved.

Left unrecognized and unattended, grief can negatively impact "every aspect of our being—physically, cognitively, emotionally, spiritually," says Sonya Lott, a Philadelphia-based psychologist specializing in grief counseling.

Yet with our national focus on the daily turn of events as the coronavirus spreads and with the chaos it has brought, these underlying or secondary losses may escape us. People who are physically well may not feel entitled to their emotional upset over the disruption of normal life. Yet, Lott argues, 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.

"Even if you're not directly affected by a particular loss, you may be feeling the grief of others."

Recognize Our Losses

Whether we've named them or not, these are some of the community-wide losses many of us are grieving. Consider how you feel when you think of these.

Social connections – Perhaps the most impactful of the immediate losses as we hunker down at home is the separation from close friends and family. "Children aren't able to play together. There's no in-person social engagement, no hugging, no touching, which is disruptive to our emotional well-being," says Daniel.

Separation from our colleagues and office mates also creates significant loss. Says Lott: "Our work environment is like a second family. Even if we don't love all the people we work with, we still depend on each other."

Habits and habitat – With the world outside no longer safe to inhabit the way we once did, Daniel says we've lost our "habits and habitats," as we can no longer engage in our usual routines and rituals. And no matter how mundane they may have seemed, whether grabbing a morning coffee at the local café, driving to work, or picking up the kids from school, routines help define our sense of self in the world. Losing them

shocks your system.

Assumptions and security – We go to sleep assuming we'll wake up the next morning, "that the sun will be there and your friends will all be alive and you'll be healthy," Weller says. But the spread of the virus has shaken nearly every assumption we once counted on. "And so we're losing our sense of safety in the world and our assumptions about ourselves," he says.

Trust in our systems – When government leaders, government agencies, medical systems, religious bodies, the stock market and corporations fail to meet public expectations, it can leave citizens feeling betrayed and emotionally unmoored. "We are all grieving this loss," Daniel says.

Sympathetic loss for others – Even if you're not directly affected by a particular loss, you may be feeling the grief of others, including those of displaced workers, of healthcare workers on the frontlines, of people barred from visiting elderly relatives in nursing homes, and of those who have already lost friends and family to the virus and to those who will.

4 Ways to Honor Your Grief

Once you identify the losses you're feeling, look for ways to honor the grief surrounding you, grief experts urge.

Bear witness and communicate

Sharing our stories is an essential step, says Daniel. "If you can't talk about what's happened to you and you can't share it, you can't really start working on it," Daniel says. "So, communicate with your friends and family about your experience."

It can be as simple as picking up the phone and calling a friend or family member, says Weller. He suggests simply asking for and offering a space in which to share your feelings **without** either of you offering advice or trying to fix anything for the other. "Grief is not a problem to be solved," he says. "It's a presence in the psyche awaiting, witnessing."

For those with robust social networks, Daniel suggests gathering a group of friends virtually to share these losses together. Using apps, such as Zoom, Skype, Facetime or Facebook Live, virtual meetups are easy to set up on a daily or weekly basis.

Write, create, express

Whether you're an extrovert or introvert, keeping a written or recorded journal of these days offers another way to express, to identify, and to acknowledge loss and grief. And then there's art therapy, which can be especially helpful for children unable to express well with words, for teens, and even for many adults.

"Make a sculpture, draw a picture or create a ceremonial object," says Daniel.

Meditate

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. For beginners who want guidance, try downloading a meditation app onto your smart phone or computer. One popular app is Calm.

Be open to joy

And finally, Lott urges, make sure to let joy and gratitude into your life during these challenging times. Whether it's a virtual happy hour, tea time or dance party, reach out to others, she says.

"If we can find gratitude in the creative ways that we connect with each other and help somebody," she says, "then we can hold our grief better and move through it with less difficulty and more grace."



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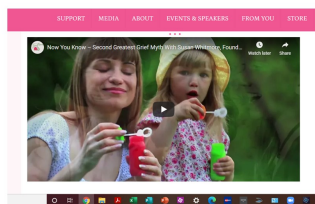
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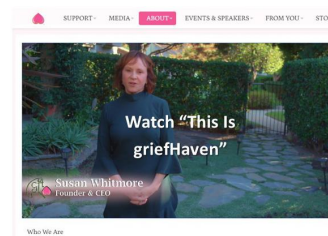
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