

Vermonters Are With You

Feelings of loss and grief during the COVID-19 crisis



For those who have lost friends or loved ones to COVID-19, feelings of grief and loss are expected. For those who have not lost anyone, however, feeling grief or living with a general sense of loss may come as a surprise – especially when those feelings don't go away.

Feelings of grief and loss are common during a public emergency, since even if we haven't lost a loved one, we are experiencing loss. Our routines changed suddenly. Some of us lost jobs, and we all have lost in-person social contacts for an extended time. Even when the spring lockdown eased, we still weren't moving around and meeting friends and family as freely as we used to. Some of us got sick with COVID-19 and may still be feeling the effects of the illness, and of course now our holiday traditions have been interrupted.

Given the challenges the Coronavirus has created, it's probably safe to say that most of us are mourning losses we've experienced since March of 2020. The way each of us mourns, however, or expresses feelings of loss, is unique, so being aware of the broad range of emotions that may come up is helpful.

The information below comes from University of California, San Francisco distinguished professor of psychiatry and author of "Grieving as Well as Possible" Mardi Horowitz, MD, on the process of grief.

- **The grief period** after a loss can be lightened, but not eliminated.
- **You may find that you grapple with all kinds of emotions.** This is normal and not under anyone's full conscious control. It is not a matter of will power to prevent your mind from clouding with unwanted emotions, or to force yourself to feel something in particular.
- **Everyone's experience differs, even in the same household.** Each person must negotiate their own grief with the help of their community supports.
- **For a time after a loss**, you may experience feelings of apathy, insomnia, poor or increased appetite, anxiety, irritability and weight loss or gain. These symptoms are often associated with feeling deeply sad and having severe worries. But do not be surprised if there is a stage of feeling numb and a bit unreal or not yourself. There are stages of reaction and not all affected parties go through the stages at the same time or in the same order.
- **Feeling grief requires courage and stamina** to endure what must be tolerated, and to make navigating the difficult feelings manageable without too much emotional cost to others.
- **Take pride in taking care of yourself and others.** Pay attention to feelings and stay in touch with others as much as you can.
- **If you have suicidal impulses or cannot function**, you are probably suffering from a complicated grief reaction and/or a clinical depression, and you should promptly seek professional help. Text the letters VT to 741741 or call the National Suicide Prevention line at 1-800-273-8255. Both are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Vermonters Are With You.

**You
Are
Not
Alone**

Help is Available, 24/7

COVIDSupportVT.org, call 2-1-1, or visit Facebook, Instagram or Twitter for free, anonymous help

If you need help, text VT to 741741

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-8255

Vermont Peer Support Line – Call or text 833-888-2557

