



# Coping with grief during COVID-19

People usually think of grief happening from the loss of a loved one. But grief can happen from any major change or loss. The COVID-19 crisis has interfered with people's normal routines. Most people get a sense of relief having a routine and knowing when something is expected. All that has changed for the time being and we are left with a sense of not knowing what comes next. Many people are also worried about what the "new normal" will look like once the crisis is over.

Grief can be experienced as feelings of shock, sadness, anger and confusion. Grief can make people feel overwhelmed, lose interest in activities they used to enjoy, sleep less or more, or have changes in their appetite. These are normal responses to loss or change.

Below is a list of some things that you can do to help get through the grief:

- Reach out to family, friends or co-workers by phone, text, email or video calls. Part of grief is thinking that no one else is feeling the same things. When you talk about it, you see that you are not alone.
- Exercise at home to music or an online video or yoga. Exercising can help your mind and body stay healthy. This may be a great time to learn relaxation or visualization techniques. There are many sources for these online.
- Try to limit the amount of time watching negative content on television. Stick with credible sources for health information such as the CDC (Center for Disease Control) or WHO (World Health Organization).
- Walking and riding a bike are safe ways to exercise. Just be sure to talk to your doctor first before significantly increasing your activity and remember to follow social distancing rules. Usually this means staying at least 6 feet apart.
- Try to keep up a healthy diet and eat regularly. Taking care of your body helps your mind stay well, too.

During time of grief, many people will turn to food. More than ever, please be mindful when nourishing your body.

- Reach out for professional help. Many counselors and therapists are offering phone or video call appointments. Professionals can help you handle strong feelings.
- Be kind to yourself and others. Find ways to connect as much as possible.

# Do one thing to promote wellness

This is the perfect time to look at the strategies to move forward into wellness and make a few changes. It does not have to be anything big — in fact, it is much smarter to start small and add as we get comfortable. Here are a few things you can do to get started on your recovery and wellness journey

## Get up and move

Adding movement can help give your body endorphins and brighten your outlook on life. If going to the gym feels daunting, start small:

- Play a favorite song, close your eyes and move to the music for a few minutes.
- Go up and down the stairs a few times in a row.
- Walk your dog an extra block.

## Connect

Social connectedness is critical to moving from recovery to well-being, but it's not always easy. Try these tips to get started:

- Connect with one person via Facebook or email a day. Ask them how they are, and be curious.
- Volunteer once at a local animal shelter to walk a dog or pet a cat.
- Make an in-person donation to a local food bank.
- Fill a bag with usable, but not needed, clothes and take it to the Salvation Army or Goodwill. Look into the volunteer's eyes and say thank you.

## Be grateful

We sometimes focus so much on what is wrong with us we forget to focus on what is right with us. Focusing on the good can give us energy to work on the bad stuff.

- Make a list of things you are grateful for in the morning.
- Think back to a time when someone did something kind or helpful for you. Thank them in an email or letter. You will make their day.
- Pay it forward by doing one kind thing for someone each day.
- Compliment someone on their work, dress or sense of humor.

## Add an element

Many times, adding simple things to your daily routine can be very helpful. Here are a few to try:

- Add a short meditation session to your daily routine.
- Drink plenty of water, but don't over-hydrate. Getting enough water is more important than we think. But some medications make us very thirsty, and drinking too much water is not good for you either. Fill a container with your eight glasses and make sure you drink it during the day.

- Make sure you get outside. Many of us benefit by having time in the sun, but don't forget your sunscreen.

Now is a good time to try something new that can be added to any current medication and talk therapy regime to help move toward recovery, build resiliency and enhance well-being. Just do one thing. Start small. Add as you go.

# Tips for learning resilience

Some people see the glass as half full, while others view it as half empty. The quality that helps people deal with stress and bounce back more quickly in a positive way is called resilience.

Resilience refers to the ability to manage stress, adversity or trauma. It is the ability to “bounce back” more quickly in healthier ways after relationship problems, losing a job or other life stressors.

Recent research has shown that resilience is a quality that can be learned. It involves how we think and behave, and it takes practice. One way that may help us become more resilient is by taking charge of how we react or respond to life’s events. It’s something we can control — not something that controls us.

But being resilient doesn’t mean ignoring life’s ups and downs. People with resilience take the time to grieve a loss or major life change in a way that acknowledges emotions and helps develop coping skills to deal with life. When confronted with a similar adverse life event later in life, they can then draw on their coping skills and emotional resources.

Resilience also doesn’t mean pretending stress and pain don’t affect us. Of course they do. Resilience allows us to look past our problems, manage stress and enjoy life. Resilience can help us recover from a shock or loss in a healthy way. It can help us live with chronic pain, medical condition or mental illness. A resilient person can meet life’s challenges with increased confidence.

## Characteristics of a resilient person

A resilient person typically is able to resist stress and weather bad times. They probably have:

- A network of supportive people
- A sense of confidence in their own abilities
- Good communication skills
- Good problem-solving skills
- Techniques for managing feelings and impulses
- The ability to use coping skills gained from prior life experiences to deal with present day experiences

## Ways to develop resilience

- **Make health a priority.** When you eat a healthy diet, exercise regularly and get plenty of sleep, you’re better able to meet life’s challenges.
- **Lean on others.** Get support from family and friends in both good and bad times. Socializing with others is important. Some people find that a faith community, volunteer group or other organized group can be helpful for building a support network.
- **Look to the future.** Keep the current setback in perspective in the long-term picture. Set goals and work to meet them to help gain a sense of accomplishment. Be proactive about anticipated changes and make a plan to get through them, focusing on the things that you have the power to control.
- **Learn from mistakes and successes.** Think about how you’ve handled adversity in the past and learn from what worked and what didn’t. What triggers negative emotions? Can coping skills help before problems

feel overwhelming?

- **It's OK to feel emotions.** Resilience isn't about bottling up emotions or denying painful feelings. It's OK to take some time to grieve losses and not feel guilty about having emotions. Acknowledging these feelings is a healthy way to deal with life.
- **Accept change.** Change is part of life. When things feel out of control, focus on making realistic changes. This also includes significant people, such as friends and family — who can offer help with ways to make changes.
- **Learn to trust.** Develop confidence solving problems and making positive changes overall.

Overcoming significant stresses and adversity isn't easy. Licensed counselors or employee assistance programs are available to offer tips to build a resilient attitude. Seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

#### Sources:

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