

GRIEF & LOSS

IN THE COVID-19 CONTEXT AND BEYOND

Grieving is hard. Loss is often unexpected. Even if it was foreseeable, it may still feel sudden or as if there was no time to prepare. Perhaps you lost someone or something recently, or the current situation is causing feelings of sadness from a previous loss to re-emerge. If someone you loved has died, know you are not alone.

Across the globe, hundreds of thousands of people have died from COVID-19, even though many more have recovered. It is likely you were unable to see your loved one before they passed away. The severity of COVID-19 illness and intensity of treatments created a sense of inevitable death for some people. Others may have seemed to be recovering or experiencing mild illness, leaving you shocked by their passing.

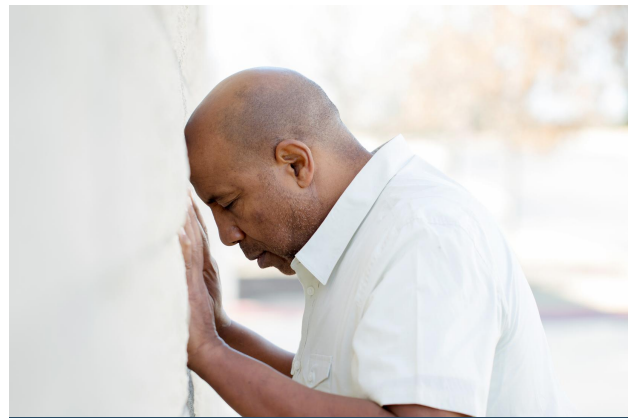
The loss of people in our lives, whether sudden or foreseeable, cause many feelings that may become overwhelming. No matter when someone in our lives dies, it can be a shock. There may be questions no one can answer. There may be logistics that seem impossible or out of our control.

Everyone Grieves In Their Own Way

Depending on your culture, beliefs, faith and the nature of your loss, the way you grieve will differ from others. There is no right way to grieve, it is a deeply personal and unique journey.

If you are an older adult, you may find yourself feeling isolated. After losing a loved one, you may feel more alone than before. You may need extra time to adjust, which is okay.

Rest assured resources are available to help you.



For some people, grief reactions may become overwhelming or lead to suicidal thoughts. These impairing thoughts generally mean that more help is needed. There are many resources to assist with these concerns.

Disaster Distress Helpline:

Call 1-800-985-5990

Text TALKWITHUS to 66746

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:

Call 1-800-273-8255

Text TALK to 741741

Friendly Caller Program for LGBTQ+

Call 248-567-2363

Call 2-1-1 for local resources including:

- Area Agency on Aging
- AARP Friendly Voices program
- Community Mental Health Providers

Michigan COVID-19 mental health resources

- Call 1-888-535-6136 (press 8)
- [Michigan.gov/StayWell](https://www.michigan.gov/StayWell)

Understanding Grief And Loss

Most people experience common feelings of grief; sadness, anger, or feeling lost. Yet, each person's experience is unique and feelings shift over time, even minute to minute. There is no "right way" to grieve, nor is there a timeline to follow.

Many people feel "wrapped in cotton" during the first days following a loss. Their feelings are numbed. Some may feel disbelief, especially if there is no funeral, visitation, or other social connection. Gradually, feelings return, bringing sadness, memories, or even anger at the person for leaving you behind. Allow time to experience these feelings then talk about them with others. This can help soften their edges and allow the feelings to be processed.

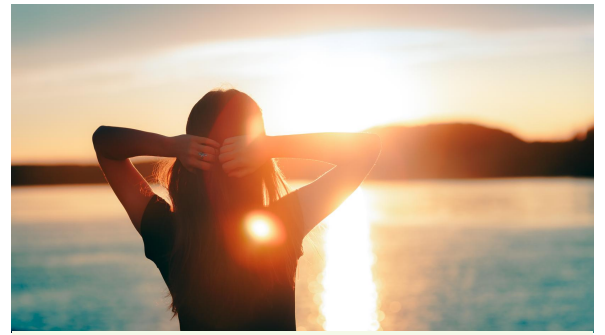
Grief over a significant loss may also feel like a roller coaster of emotions. Some days may feel fine, others filled with sadness. This is the healing process at work. Try to accept that these feelings will come and go, and ride the ups and downs.

It is natural to feel conflicting emotions and confusion or worry. Examples include:

- Problems remembering, concentrating, or prioritizing
- Strong feelings of sadness, anger, guilt, loneliness, hopelessness or joy in remembering
- Increased or decreased activity
- Questioning faith or increased religious activities
- Desire for company, or for being alone
- Fatigue, sleep difficulties, appetite changes
- Financial insecurity or loss

Coping And Resilience

You may be wondering how to cope with your grief, which is a normal reaction. You will learn to carry your grief in new ways, over time. As humans we have a deep ability to rebound from adversity and continue to move forward - this is resilience. Allow yourself to experience your unique feelings, but seek help if you are overwhelmed by the healing or grieving process.



Your Grief Journey

Acknowledge that this is a difficult process and promote healing through simple actions. Some of these actions may feel forced or difficult initially but will become easier in time. Be patient with yourself and the process of grieving.

Create a gratitude journal to record things you are thankful for daily

Keep a daily routine. Create schedules for activities, meals and sleep

Stay connected with loved ones

Share memories of your deceased loved one

Try [meditation](#) or [mindfulness activities](#)

Avoid using alcohol or drugs to cope

Sadness

Pushing powerful feelings down is common, but not useful in the long run. While trying to feel “in control,” powerful feelings have a way of being expressed in other, less beneficial ways. Allow yourself to cry, to remember, to feel angry or confused. Like other life changes, loss requires you to acknowledge the changes, feel the hurt, and let the sadness wash through you. You will have more positive days as time goes on. This is not about forgetting the loss, or the person who is gone. It is about accepting it and growing. We are often changed by loss, but even if the loss is not a positive, the change within ourselves can be positive as we learn to heal and grow and develop our resilience.

Seeking Support

It is important to recognize when you reach a point of needing extra help. People may need more support than friends can provide. Turning first to people you trust like friends, family, or neighbors can be helpful. Sometimes, they may not be able to provide enough support for the loss you experienced. It is okay if you need additional help.

If you find your days are not improving, you can't enjoy regular activities, you feel stuck in sadness or distress, or have suicidal thoughts, seek professional help. Sharing your situation with a trained counselor can help you through the process. Professional support comes in many forms such as through grief counselors or therapists. They are trained to assist with loss and difficult life events. Sharing with a trained provider can help you gain perspective and walk you through your grief.

Another means of support comes from community grieving. Group support helps us feel less alone during times of loss. It can be helpful to find ways to connect with people or groups that you might not have connected with before. You can create new relationships that carry you through this difficult time and forge strong bonds with others who have experienced similar loss.

Where to Find Support

Reach out to people you trust. If you need additional help, consider some of the options below:

Group Support

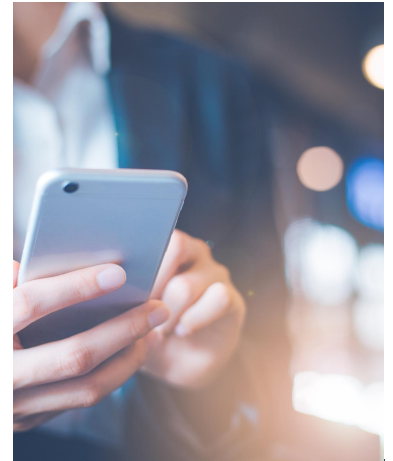
- Faith-based organizations
- Hospitals
- Hospice organizations
- Funeral homes

Personal Support

- Friends
- Family
- Neighborhood connections

Professional Support

- Grief counseling
- Community Mental Health Services
- Your doctor



If sadness or grief becomes overwhelming, seek support.

Visit [Michigan.gov/StayWell](https://www.michigan.gov/StayWell)

Find immediate counseling resources on page one.

Talking About Your Loss With Others

You may have the responsibility of telling children or other adults about a death, and this can feel like an overwhelming burden. Children should be told as directly and clearly as possible, at a level they can understand, and using terms appropriate for their age and maturity. It is important to be honest and explain that death is irreversible and permanent. There are many ways to support children through loss.

Telling adult friends and family members about the death of a loved one can be difficult and even traumatic. These are normal feelings. It is important to remember that the news of the death is a way to report facts and honor the deceased and their loved ones. Sharing stories about the person who died can help you process your grief with others. Sometimes, having to share the news of a death is overwhelming. If you are experiencing difficulties coping with this, it is okay to seek help in processing your own feelings as well.



Resources For Children

- [Helping Children Through Grief and Loss](#)
- [How to Talk to Children About the Coronavirus Pandemic](#)
- [Ele's Place](#)
- [Tip Sheet for Helping Children Cope with Stress](#)

Additional Resources

American Psychiatric Association
[Coronavirus Resources](#)

Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress
[When a Loved One Dies from COVID-19](#)

Community Mental Health Association of Michigan Resources
[COVID-19 Resources](#)

Hospice of Michigan
[Resources for Patients and Loved Ones](#)
Call 1-888-247-5701

Funeral Service Foundation
[Grieving Alone and Together: Responding to the Loss of Your Loved One during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

Hospice of Michigan
[Resources for Patients and Loved Ones](#)
Call 1-888-247-5701

Michigan Funeral Homes Association
[Pre-arranging, recent loss/choices, and resources](#)

Psychology Today
[What Do the COVID-19 Pandemic and Grieving Have in Common?](#)

[How to Cope with Bereavement During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

State Advisory Council on Aging
[Helping Older Adults with Social Distancing Tips and Resources](#)

STAY WELL
Michigan.gov/StayWell