

COVID-19 LOSS AND GRIEF

Most people experience the grief process which is a natural reaction when they lose something or someone important to them.

Grief can be a painful, stressful, and difficult journey.

Sometimes the unexpected death of the loved one can happen suddenly, especially as a result of violence, war, *epidemic*, and the signs of the grief may be more severe and the process may take longer.

According to the data compiled by Johns Hopkins University, the number of deaths around the worldwide is 171,249 up to date (data of April 21, 2020) due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Although each person goes through a different process, basically it consists of five basic phases:

The phases of grief at a normal time

DENIAL	The event/situation is ignored, not accepted.
ANGER /ANNOYANCE	'Why me? Why us?'
BARGAINING	It is thought 'Maybe there is a way out.'
DEPRESSION	Unhappiness, Not wanting to do anything, indifference is experienced.
ACCEPTANCE	It is the stage of digesting the situation and returning to the normal flow of life.

The phases of grief during the COVID-19 Process

DENIAL	All this is an exaggeration of the media. It is the same as the flu. People get flu every year and almost no one dies. Me; I am not an elderly person, who has an immune deficiency, sensitive to lung conditions, so I will be fine.
ANGER /ANNOYANCE	It is all China's fault. If they had quarantined before, we would not have had this problem.
BARGAINING	Spending time with others as long as they wash their hands is not a problem.
DEPRESSION	I can not go to work, I can't make money. Very soon, I will run out of money and become homeless. I can say goodbye to my hopes and dreams. I am at high risk and will die alone. Nobody will come to help me when I am in need.
ACCEPTANCE	I can't control the outbreak but I can do my part by taking shelter, washing my hands and staying positive. Social isolation does not mean that my life should stop. I can work from home and still be able to connect with my friends and family via phone and the internet. I can enjoy the extra time I spend with my wife, children, and pets.

SIGNS of GRIEF

PHYSICAL	EMOTIONAL	METACOGNITION	BEHAVIORAL
Headache	Denying death	Not being able to prevent thinking the person who died and death	Extreme mobility
Pain in chest	Sorrow	Blaming himself/herself	Avoiding the pain of loss by dedicating yourself to help fully
Tightness in chest	Crying	Getting angry for himself/herself	Staying away from people and do not want to meet anyone
Knotting in the throat	Longing	Regret	Over-heading or trying to stay away from the deceased's belongings or places that he/she stayed
Difficulty in swallowing	Anger	Recall / experience the moment of death	Over-heading or trying to stay away from the deceased's belongings or places that he/she stayed
Feeling of hunger	Boredom	Unsteadiness	Frequent visit to the grave or unable to go to the grave
Nausea	Insecurity	Difficulty in concentration	Using alcohol and/or drugs
Vomiting	Uneasiness	Memory problems	Sexual changes
Constipation or diarrhoea	Fear that he/she will lose his/her mind	Disbelief	Sleeping disorders
Shortness of breath	Loss of interest and desire for life	A mess in thoughts	Eating disorders
Palpitation	Cannot enjoy anything	Forgetfulness	Carelessness
Menstrual irregularities	Cannot feel any emotions	Seeing disturbing dreams	Behaving obsessively
Shortness of breath			
Weakness in muscles	Despair and pessimism about the future		

Tension and contractions	Loneliness		
Sleeping disorders	Despair		
Changes in appetite			
Weakness and fatigue			

Recommendations for the people in grief

1. Recognition of the grief process, knowing that grief is a process that requires time and effort.
2. Knowing that grief is a process that can vary from person to person, giving opportunities to individual differences (just as members of the family can react differently).
3. Addressing non-remedial coping strategies such as alcohol and/or drug use, avoiding visiting loss-related places, and discussing these with the person.
4. Mental disorders (such as depression, anxiety disorder, suicidal thoughts and attempts) that may occur after the death and be directed to a professional.

Things to watch out for if someone is in grief around you

1. Meeting basic needs (nutrition, dressing, shelter, etc.).
2. Having a sleep pattern.
3. Creating a safe environment.
4. Talking about the person who died for the acceptance of the loss.
5. Allowing emotions (such as pain, anger, sadness, desperation) to be voiced arising from the loss.
6. Avoiding words such as “You must be strong”, “It will pass soon”, “Life continues”, “You must survive for your children”, instead, trying to understand and share the feelings experienced.
7. To help organize ceremonies related to the funeral in line with its culture and belief.
8. To identify problems that may arise after death, talk about different options, and help learn ways to cope.
9. Avoiding important life-related changes and sudden decisions (such as business or city change).

10. Strengthening contact with people who can provide social support, such as family and friends, and directing them to support groups and mental health services and/or institutions if necessary.

11. Taking into consideration the positive effects of the grief process, directing them to work-life, supporting students to continue school, and encouraging non-workers, the elderly, and housewives to find new interests.

12. Consulting to a professional during the grief process when the symptoms are severe, affect the person's daily life, and last longer than expected.

Exp. Psychologist Çise Haşimoğulları