

GRIEVING COVID-19 (CORONA VIRUS DISEASE)

~John Kennedy Saynor~

During the winter of 2019-2020 the world was hit with a new threat – the Corona virus! To say that it has caught us off guard and disrupted our way of life is an understatement. There are many words that would describe how people are feeling during this time, and “grief” is one of them. Grief visits us in many of the situations in which we find ourselves. This is one of them.

How are you likely to be feeling?



No two people react in the same way to a similar situation, but perhaps this will clarify for you how you might be feeling. It may help you to know you are perfectly normal.

Sad “Well, you say, that should be obvious!” But we don’t always realize that grief can be a response to something other than the death of someone we love.

At this point many people are grieving the loss of their freedom to move around as they please. Some are grieving the loss of personal contact with other human beings. Some of us grieve the loss of what life was like for us and what we expected it to be for the rest of our lives. You may be grieving the loss of some of the plans you had for the next few months or next year that have been put on hold indefinitely. Unfortunately some have lost their jobs and with it, financial security. Then there are others who mourn the death of relatives and friends – and sometimes more than one. So grief has become a companion on our journey that we didn’t invite.

Afraid It is normal to be afraid at a time such as this. All around us unsuspecting people, innocent people, are being infected or affected by this virus. It seems nothing can be done. Perhaps you are afraid that one of your family members will be infected and die. Others fear being left alone or being in financial distress. Fear along with grief has become a constant companion.

Helpless We like to be in control don’t we? We love to think we are masters of our own destiny and so when something or someone comes along that takes that control from us, we feel helpless. Many who have been travelling are in mandatory isolation. Most of us are in a “stay at home” advisory. We can do very little without checking first if it is OK with those in authority. For some, it is the first time in their lives they have ever asked for help.

Lonely While there are people in our neighbourhood who enjoy their solitude and who appreciate being alone, I think it is safe to say that most of us are social characters. We enjoy being with people. We love meeting someone we haven't seen for a while. And it makes us feel good to walk down the street or go into the grocery store and meet someone we know and catch up on their latest news. When that is taken away from us, we become lonely and long for the days when we can meet with our friends again.



There are other words that you would use to describe how you are feeling right now. Perhaps you can take a minute and put them down on paper and recognize that what you are feeling is perfectly normal.

[So...what can I do to help myself get through this crisis?](#)

1. Probably the first thing that would help is for you to recognize that what you are feeling is what many others around you are feeling. If you have only one person in your life that you can talk to about these feelings, then please do. It will be a big help to you.

2. Do what you can to keep in touch with others. We have so many means of keeping in touch with people these days: the phone (of course), Facebook, the internet, and email. Today I heard of a 93 year old woman who fell and broke her hip and the first thing she asked for after her surgery was her ipad!!!! Use what you can to keep in touch.



3. Make a list of things you need at the grocery store. Keep it near your phone and when someone calls and asks you if you need anything, share your list with them! If they called, they want to help and helping you will make them feel better too! Don't be afraid to ask for help!

4. Have you had a death in your family or among your friends during this crisis? You probably weren't able to go to the wake or the funeral. Take a minute to sit down and make a list of the things you liked about that person. To be really honest, make a list of the things that drove you crazy about that person. Then,

make a note of some of the good memories you have of him or her. Then, imagine that this person can hear you and say “thank you” for what he or she meant to you.

We all feel like we need to do something at a time like this, so you may want to make a donation to a charity in memory of the person. When you are making the donation, be sure to tell the charity who it is in memory of. Also a phone call or letter to one of the survivors of the one who died will mean a great deal to the person you contacted.

5. Take care of yourself. I think it is important to limit the amount of news you listen to. It will only make you feel worse, until the day comes when there is hopeful news to report. But right now, pay attention to the guidelines our governments are laying down for us. On the advice of scientists and doctors, they are doing what they believe is best for us.

In her address to the Commonwealth, in fact, to the whole world, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth said this “I hope in the years that come that everyone will take pride in how they responded to this challenge.” Looking after yourself and at the same time looking after others is a great challenge but in the end, we will be thankful for the little things we did and the sacrifices we made.



6. Draw on the resources of your faith or whatever brings you comfort. Prayer, meditation, readings, music are used by millions around the world to bring calm to our lives and to remind us of what it is that gives us courage to face our difficulties. Above all, we need to remain hopeful that this crisis will soon end. The loss that you have experienced will remain with you for the rest of your life. But the pain will lessen and you will be surprised that you do have the strength to carry on.

“Hope is unruly. Hope floats, when it shouldn’t. Hope, simply defined, is the capacity to imagine a future. Like memory—which I would define as the ability to rightly recall the past—hope is an essential element of what it means to be fully human and fully alive. Without hope, we die.” - Brother Kevin Hackett SSJE