

# ALLONE HEALTH FAMILY OF EAPS

## GRIEVING THE INTANGIBLES

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We all know about grief when we lose someone, a valued companion or something that we care about. At times we feel bad, we cry, and we seek support from others who also miss the person, the companion or the thing. But as time passes, we eventually begin to get back to who we were before the loss.

In this pandemic, some of us have or might have people we know directly, or love, die, but is that the only loss we are now sustaining? What about other losses we are currently sustaining as a result of the pandemic and the virtual shut down of normal life over the last weeks and for the foreseeable future?

In context, we historically have had the freedom to:

- **Go to work.**
- **Go to school.**
- **Go shopping (groceries and fun stuff).**
- **Go out to eat.**
- **Go visit friends and relatives.**
- **Go to the movies.**
- **Go to parties.**
- **Go out for a drink.**
- **Go to the library.**
- **Go to sporting events.**
- **Go to \_\_\_\_\_.**

While we lost some of the freedoms we have had in the past, we've also lost our sense of control, sense of immortality, sense of justice, sense of self-identity and sense of spiritual belief. It is within these losses, we will begin to explore.

### SENSE OF CONTROL

Whether we have "essential jobs" and are working in our usual environment (with precautions), working from home (with very different co-workers who may demand our time without respect to work hours) or out of work, but stuck at home, we have some degree of concern for our personal health and safety (the purchase of guns and ammunition have gone up dramatically in some areas).

### SENSE OF IMMORTALITY

Yes, we know we are all going to die eventually, but we expect it to happen in the future. Now we are confronted with the reality of tens of thousands of people dying in our country, and we may not be able to be there with them, or even have a normal memorial celebration.

## SENSE OF JUSTICE

It's just not fair . . .

- **The social impact.**
- **The financial impact.**
- **The community impacts.**
- **The organizational impact.**

## SENSE OF SELF IDENTITY

Who we are in our own minds can be significantly challenged in these times!

- I am used to being able to directly problem solve on the problem.
- I am used to bringing home a paycheck.
- I am used to taking care of others.
- I am used to feeling purposeful and useful.

## SENSE OF SPIRITUAL BELIEFS

Whatever our sense of a higher power, or supreme being, or cosmic organizer, these are challenging times.

- With physical distancing, we cannot go to our places of worship or seek solace in those buildings.
- We can find the results of the pandemic inconsistent with our thoughts of our faith.

## GRIEVING PROCESS

George Bonano in his book "The Other Side of Sadness" describes grief as coming in waves. At first the waves are high and close together, with only a little time in between when things might seem normal for a minute, an hour, or brief period before the next wave hits. Gradually, over time, the waves begin to diminish and get further apart, only to be hit unexpectedly sometimes with a big one.

This Pandemic is not a single event that has happened and now we are coping with aftermath. We are in a holding pattern waiting for the worst to pass, then hopeful that we can gradually return to a new normal. So, the grieving process is ongoing for a longer period of time.

For many of us, this is a difficult time and as we begin to process this pandemic, specifically to our own lives, we begin to identify ways in which we can begin to contain our current situation. So, we ask ourselves, "what can I do?"

## WHAT CAN I DO?

### 1. MAINTAIN SOME FORM OF ONGOING ROUTINE:

- Get up at the normal time.
- Go to bed at the normal time.
- Get dressed (may not need to dress up, shave as often, or fancy make up, but shift into daytime mode).
- Keep some form of schedule.
- Do something every day that you can feel like you accomplished something.

## 2. DEVELOP A SENSE OF CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM

- Write down what is going on in your life that is neutral to OK.
  - Celebrate whatever you have written to beat back some of the negative thoughts.
- Accept what we cannot change.
- Accept our fears, but do not get lost in them.
- Ask for support where you can get it.
- Remember that the current situation is temporary, even though we don't know how long it will last.
- Staying connected with others and observe physical distancing.
- Actually, talk with others, in addition to texting/emailing.
  - Have virtual coffee breaks.
  - Have virtual “happy hours” with friends via media products that let several people on the phone or screens.
  - Talk about good things too, not just the “doom and gloom”.

Figure out one or two things that you can accomplish today (save some things for tomorrow), then celebrate at the end of the day that despite everything happening at this time, you were able to accomplish one of your goals. Maybe some of your goals could be fun projects like playing with your children or significant other, especially something that requires us to put down our electronic devices for a little while.

Human beings are genetically predisposed to pay more attention to “threats” than positive happenings. While you should not ignore the bad or pretend it isn't happening, you should also not let it consume you. Try paying some attention each day to the more positive. At the end of the day, what can you legitimately be grateful for? Write them down so you can refer to them as frequently as you need.

### SELF-CARE TOO

Focus some attention on what you can do that:

- You enjoy
- Find relaxing
- Gives you a sense of achievement
- Helps you stay connected to others

Remember, be patient with yourself within this process and continue to work towards improving your overall wellbeing.

