

# Coping with Grief and Loss during this time of pandemic



During this year of COVID-19, many people have experienced the loss of a loved one. Due to the pandemic restrictions, social distancing and limits on the size of in-person gatherings, parishioners may have found it more difficult to fully grieve the loss of their loved one. According to one hospital chaplain, some people feel that they have been deprived of the ability to really grieve, and therefore feel like they are in a state of limbo, as if the loss did not

really happen. Many older adults are especially vulnerable after losing a family member or friend because their feelings of grief and loss are compounded by frequent loneliness and isolation due to the pandemic. For healthy grieving to occur, it is important not to avoid grieving or to suppress one's feelings. Each person deals with the grief process in his or her own way. Common reactions to grief include shock, denial, anger, guilt, sadness and finally acceptance. The stress from grief can lead to physical complaints such as loss of sleep or appetite, tension headaches, stomach pain and reduced attention span. Although people may not be able to grieve in ways they are used to, it is important and necessary to find ways to connect with others during this time.

Here are a few ways to cope with feelings of grief after the loss of a loved one:

1. For older adults, staying connected to others is very important if they are grieving and socially isolated. Schedule phone calls or video chats with family members and friends. Share stories, memories or photos through email, Facebook posts, group texts, Zoom conference calls, or through the postal mail. Pray the Rosary or a special prayer, such as the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, or do spiritual reading when alone or when connecting with other family members and friends. There are many Catholic and Christian websites that offer beautiful prayers to help one with grief and loss. Much strength can be obtained through spiritual support and prayer.
2. Take part in an activity such as planting a tree or preparing a favorite meal that has significance to you and the loved one who died.
3. Practice good self-care when grieving. Eat a healthy diet, stay hydrated, exercise regularly and get enough rest.
4. Give yourself time to work through the grief process. Reaching a place of acceptance takes time. Remember that everyone experiences grief differently. There is no right or wrong way to feel after losing someone.
5. Seek grief counseling, mental health services or support groups when struggling to deal with feelings of grief. There are several resources in Orange County that offer grief support groups:
  - a. **Vitas Bereavement Services:** [vitas.com/grief](https://www.vitas.com/grief), (714) 734-2753. Grief support groups, including Spanish-speaking groups, phone-in and Zoom video supports.
  - b. **GriefShare:** [griefshare.org](https://www.griefshare.org), (800) 395-5755. A recovery support group where one can find help and healing for the hurt of losing a loved one. Groups are currently meeting online.
  - c. **St. Joseph Hospice Bereavement Coordinator:** Terry Preston (714) 712-7209. Bereavement support group for adults.
  - d. **St. Jude Healing Hearts After Loss:** (877) 459-3627, bereavement group.
  - e. **Mariposa Women & Family Center, Orange:** (714) 547-6494, grief groups or individual counseling.

It is essential to find healthy ways to cope with loss. It is also important to remember there is help available, and that even during a pandemic, one does not have to grieve alone.