

Dealing with COVID-19 Losses

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought us many losses. The loss of friends, family, community leaders, and elders is overwhelming. Traditional ways of grieving with funerals and ceremonies couldn't happen, making it even harder to grieve those lost during this time.

But it isn't just the people who have died that we have lost. We've also dealt with loss in our day-to-day lives. Jobs and other income opportunities were lost or reduced; some had to change living situations; and some survivors of COVID-19 continue to deal with lingering health effects many months later.

We've also dealt with changes to our social lives. Schools, churches, and event spaces were closed. Celebrations, ceremonies, and cultural activities were canceled or altered. Some families and friends didn't see each other for many months. Hugs weren't shared with grandparents, new babies, and other loved ones. Our daily interactions changed as friendly smiles hid behind masks and we kept our distance from others.



We're finally getting back to life, but how do we do that while we deal with the losses we've experienced?

Acknowledge the losses

Allow yourself time to grieve for the lives lost as well as other personal losses. Know that it takes time to grieve and that most people don't grieve well alone. Grief is never easy, but it may take longer than expected to process and recover.

Find support

Reach out to family and friends. Talk about your feelings.

Reconnect with those you have missed or lost touch with-- in person, by phone, text, email, letter, anything that feels right to you.

Recognize that some may still wish to keep their distance in person. It may take some time for everyone to be comfortable meeting in person again, with or without masks.

Find spiritual and mental health support. Reach out to traditional healers. Consider support groups and hotlines.

Get help in a crisis.

- Contact local mental wellness services or Indian Health Service unit.
- Contact the Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990, or text "TalkWithUs" to 66746.

Practice self-care and community care

Many people have been going through similar struggles. Feelings of grief are a natural response to loss and can be overwhelming. Be kind to yourself and others.

- Take care of your body physically.
- Take time to heal and find ways to restore your balance.
- Accept what you cannot change, and focus on aspects of your life that you can control.
- Give yourself permission to feel sad. Allow yourself to feel joy and happiness, too.
- Express your grief in healthy ways. Find comfort in art, music, cooking, writing, and other activities.
- Pray and take part in sacred practices. Connect with your community and Mother Earth.
- See "Staying Safe and Mentally Well During COVID-19" (caih.jhu.edu/resource-library) for more ideas.

