Are you sad or grieving?
You’re not alone

Last year was a challenging year for all. Almost everyone lost their normal routine because of the pandemic and the loss of life has been incalculable. We are now experiencing collective or communal grief.

Collective or communal grief happens when a community, society or an entire country all experience extreme changes or great loss. Collective grief happens after major events such as war, natural disasters or national crises that result in mass casualties or widespread loss.

Today, people are experiencing collective grief on many different levels. They grieve over jobs and livelihoods lost, missed celebrations such as graduations, weddings and vacations, and experience grief associated with feeling separated from loved ones as we continue to self-isolate to protect each other.

There is deeper sense of grief that comes with loss of life due to COVID-19. Because of pandemic restrictions, many people are dying apart from their loved ones, and many others are forced to mourn apart from their family and friends. Many people were denied an opportunity for last words and closure. Some had to say goodbye through a short video call. The pandemic has made traditional funeral gatherings too risky, depriving mourners of funeral rituals and without the physical comfort of seeing friends and loved ones. Lack of closure complicates the grieving process. We are left to grieve apart — at the time when we need to be together the most. No wonder so many of us feel sad, lonely or depressed.

Even those who haven't lost someone personally are surrounded by daily reminders of death and sadness. People may be grieving their own lost routines, jobs or future plans, as well as fearing for their own health and that of their friends and family.

In reality, all feelings of loss are valid; all feelings of grief are well-founded. Every loss should be heard and acknowledged, because these feelings are important to the person experiencing it.

Advocate Aurora EAP: 800-236-3231
How can we move forward to find happiness?

Mental health problems are common. Remember to:
• Take it one day at a time
• Lean on your support system
• Take breaks from upsetting media content
• Take care of your body through exercise, relaxation and eating well
• Reach out and stay connected with others (phone calls, texts, video chats)
• Seek help if you’re feeling overwhelmed or are truly depressed

Need professional help?
Advocate Aurora EAP is here for you

Your employer has invested in your health and wellbeing. Consider booking an appointment with an Advocate Aurora counselor. EAP services are available at no cost to you or members of your household. Counseling options include telephonic, in-person or virtual video counseling. EAP counselors can help you work through challenges you are having while living through the pandemic. If you choose virtual counseling, be sure to have a secure place at home or at work to talk privately. Take the call in a room with a door that can close and use headphones, if necessary, so you can focus on the call.

Your feelings of sadness or grief are valid. We are all experiencing them. You are encouraged to ask for any help or support you might need through the Advocate Aurora EAP (800-236-3231), as we all wait for a better tomorrow.

Communal grief can encourage unity and connection

Clinical psychologist Carmen Inoa Vazquez, co-author of Grief Therapy with Latinos, offers some important insights. She wrote: “Right now, a lot of people are experiencing a sense of communal grief. They may feel like this could happen to any one of us, and they may know people who have died. Some people who have lost loved ones in the past will tell you that eventually — and the amount of time varies — they started to take a different approach to life and find meaning in the loss and in their future. During and after the pandemic, maybe people will try to pay more attention to their unfulfilled wishes, or have conversations with loved ones… and affirm their love for those people. In this way, the pandemic can bring unity and connection, and help us deal with our mortality.”

May the heaviness of loss find the lightness of hope

For assistance, please contact Advocate Aurora Employee Assistance Program: 800-236-3231

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