



Stronger Together

Parkland School Division Family Supports Newsletter December 16, 2020

Dear parents and caregivers,

All of us experience grief and loss in our lives and it is so difficult to go through. Grief and loss are not only experienced when someone dies. Especially in a pandemic, many of us have experienced the loss of connection with others, jobs, activities and have a profound sense of grief and longing for what was. It is important to reach out for support for yourself and for your family. We are here to chat and to help connect you to other partners in our community who can help.

Take care, Vicky Mamczasz -Family Support Facilitator,780-668-7422 Dena Davis- Sunrise Supports Program Liaison 780-977-6241



Family Tips for Grief and Loss with Andrea Pukalo - Family Life Psychology - Stony Plain 780-963-7451

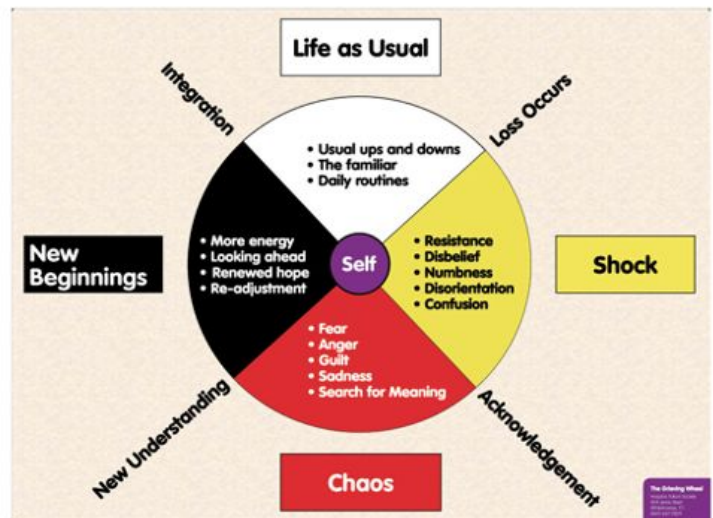
- Free online webinars
- Low cost counselling for children and adults

Grief and loss is something we all experience in life at different times. As a result of the present global pandemic, we have all experienced effects of grief and the toll it has taken on each individual, family unit, school,

community or city. Grief and loss often begins with an initial shock or disbelief in the event, situation or relational change. For some this shock might include numbness, disorientation, confusion, and resistance. Some individuals stay in shock for a time, while others quickly move into the emotional chaos of grief and loss. Acknowledging the emotional chaos of grief and loss is very important.

As a parent, it's tempting to help our children feel better without acknowledging their inner emotional chaos involved in experiencing grief. Feeling the emotional chaos of grief is the door to healing. Expressing and acknowledging emotions such as fear, anger, guilt, and sadness are essential to charting the stormy waters of a child's inner emotional chaos.

Acknowledging and processing different emotions surrounding grief enables children to transition towards a new understanding that helps them move forward in life. Whether it's the death of a pet, the loss of a loved one, or the changes in everyday life, acknowledging the emotional chaos of grief creates space for children to process their emotions. Although grief is common to the human experience, children all experience grief differently. Learning to listen more and talk less, processing the pain instead of trying to make things better right away, and building intentionality with periodic emotional check-ins are some practical strategies for parents to help children process grief and loss.



CAMH adapted from - <https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-health-and-covid-19/loss-grief-and-healing>

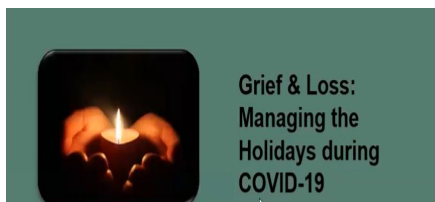
As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to unfold, communities are looking to build the “next normal.” At the same time, we are individually and collectively dealing with tremendous loss and grief. The experience of loss is one of the hardest things we can face. It may involve losing a loved one or a friend, a job, a routine, a hobby, or anything else that has left our lives. One of the most distressing things about the pandemic is the amount of loss that many of us need to process.

Grief can be emotionally overwhelming, which may lead us to try to avoid our strong feelings. However, mourning is an important part of processing a loss. When we mourn in a healthy way, we may gradually come to a deeper understanding of what the person or thing we lost meant to us, which helps to eventually restore hope and motivation. In this way we can slowly re-engage in our daily lives – even if it is in a different way than before.

Although grief and mourning are normal responses to loss, for some people they can persist, and may overlap with traumatic experiences and reactions. This can lead to significant and lasting mental health or substance use challenges. If you find that feelings of grief are overwhelming and seem “stuck,” seek professional mental health support (for example, you can ask your doctor for a referral). The healing process is unique to each person - these are some steps you can take:



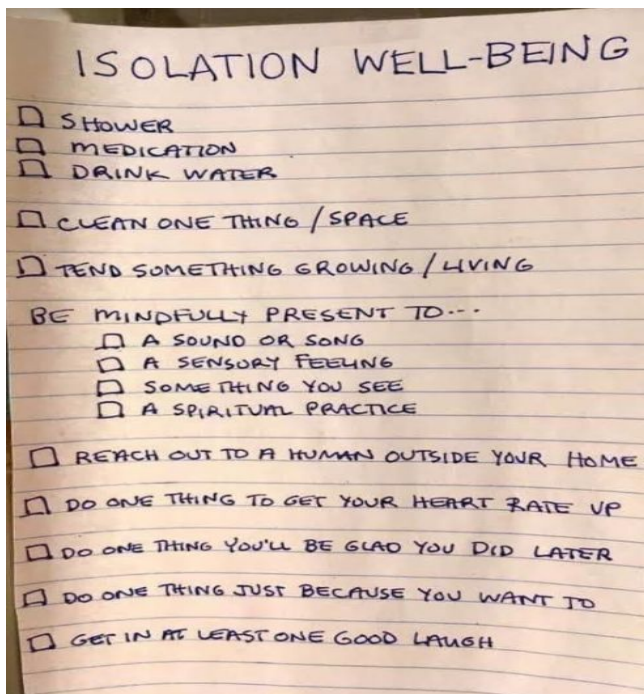
- **Name your struggles:** Naming the issues we are struggling with can bring some much-needed clarity to why we are feeling so stressed. Try to identify five things that you have found hard, and order them from least to most difficult. Choose one issue to tackle first, and break it into smaller pieces so it is easier to work on.
- **Take things one day at a time:** It can be overwhelming to think about the change and loss the pandemic has brought, and what is still to come. If we are constantly worrying about whether things will get better, it affects our mood, stress levels and motivation. Consciously taking things one day at a time can help split the big problem we may be facing into many smaller problems, which can feel more manageable.
- **Prioritize self-care:** Many people at this time are focused on thinking about and taking care of others, whether in their personal lives or professionally. In this situation it is easy to forget about taking care of ourselves. Prioritize self-care by checking in with yourself every day to see if you have taken time to keep yourself balanced, and mentally and physically healthy. For some people, self-care may include reading, writing, or revisiting an old and beloved hobby. For others, it might be staying in touch with friends and family. Try to become aware of what your mind and body need in order to stay grounded, and build it into your routine.
- **Exercise and eat healthily:** Physical activity is beneficial for our physical and mental health, especially during stressful times. Customize your exercise routine to what your body is comfortable with. It may include walks, bike rides, running, yoga and stretching, or following online exercise videos. Likewise, choose a healthy, balanced diet to give your body the nourishment and energy it needs to maintain positive mental and physical health.
- **Talk to someone:** Reach out and talk to family and friends for support. Let them know what you are experiencing and ask for what you need. If you do not feel better, reach out to your doctor and ask for a referral for professional support. For more grief and loss support resources from CAMH go to the end of the newsletter



Alberta Health Services

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/1/?tab=wm#inbox/FMfcgxwKjnZhtkvbrWgglNZqtNzHpGzl?projector=>

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from Facebook - Anonymous

A Virtual Family Christmas (ideas from <https://elizz.com/family/fun-and-creative-virtual-family-gatherings/>)

This year many of us will be meeting virtually over the holidays. These are some fun ideas to try:



- Virtual karaoke
- Online toasts
- Share an online meal together (or all order from same restaurant or type of restaurant)
 - Bring on acting chops and have a dramatic holiday reading
 - Make it a pajama party
 - Host a [charity donation party](#) (eg., I'll give you 10 bucks if you sing a holiday song for us, dress as an elf, send us all cookies beforehand, etc.). Have each member donate all the money to charity
 - Curate a holiday playlist and send to everyone before your event/party. Get everyone to add their favourites.
 - Have a [Scavenger hunt](#)
 - Make it a dessert party
 - Entertainment night – family members contribute- who can sing? play an instrument? do performance art? (or think they can). Bring on the amateur hour! On the other hand, I only found out as an adult that my family were just being polite when I played my accordion every Christmas!
- Have an interactive gratitude party. Why gratitude? It's a great way to tap into a well of warmth and love, and when we express gratitude, we feel closer to others. That is the point, isn't it?

- Play a virtual game together –movie game trivia or holiday trivia, charades, Pictionary, online holiday bingo

A MENTAL HEALTH GUIDE TO COPING WITH LOCKDOWN IN THE WINTER

 @BELIEVEPHQ



LIGHTING
On dark mornings wake up gradually with increasing light. Try out a SAD light or lumie bodyclock



STAY CONNECTED
Even though it might be difficult to see friends and family it is important that you stay connected to them on a regular basis



HELP OTHERS
Whether it is helping around the house or supporting your brother or sister, helping others can help provide you with positive emotions



LIMIT NEWS
Limit the amount of time you spend on social media and checking news



COPING STRATEGIES
Identify some positive strategies you can engage in that help you to deal with stress, worry or anxiety



CONNECT TO YOUR VALUES
Re connect with things that are important to you and try to engage with them on a regular basis



TAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF
Plan time into your week where you can engage in activities that are relaxing. It is important to have time for yourself where you engage in some self care



PLAN YOUR WEEK
Organise your week and plan in activities that provide you with a sense of pleasure and achievement



STAY ACTIVE
Throughout the day try and be active. Take a break from your work and walk around. Regular exercise can also be great for reducing stress and boosting mood



POSITIVE HABITS
Write down a list of 5 - 10 positive mental health habits you can engage with on a regular basis to maintain your mental fitness



ASK FOR HELP
If you notice yourself struggling reach out to family, friends, your doctor or a local mental health charity for help





Strong Families Series: Coping with Grief & Loss

Parkland School Division is proud to partner with Alberta Parenting For The Future to present another FREE information session for local families.

At different times in our lives, we all experience grief and loss, in the form of not only death, but also major life changes - and children are no exception. As a parent, it's tempting to help our grieving children try to feel better without acknowledging their inner

emotional chaos, but feeling this emotional chaos is the key to healing. How then does one strike the right balance in helping a child navigate their turbulent feelings without letting them become too overwhelmed to cope?

In our upcoming Strong Families session, registered psychologists Andrea & Joel Pukalo will offer families valuable information about grief and loss, as well as practical tips for supporting their children and other loved ones in processing their emotions and opening the door to renewed hope and healing.

Date: Tuesday, January 19, 2021

Time: 6:30pm

Location: Online Zoom Webinar / Discussion Group

Presenters: Andrea & Joel Pukalo, Registered Psychologists (Family Life Psychology)

Any major change can trigger feelings of grief in children: the death of a pet or a loved one, or the changes in everyday life. Although grief is common to our human journey, every child experiences it differently, and allowing them to express and acknowledge their own feelings of fear, anger, guilt, and sadness is essential in enabling them to heal.

In this session, participants will learn how to help children process the pain of grief and loss instead of trying to make it better right away. Discover practical strategies for checking in with your child's emotions and helping them find purpose and meaning in this experience so they can be motivated to move forward.

Please register early to reserve your spot by visiting

<https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/strong-families-series-coping-with-grief-loss-registration-133150533831>.

For more information, please contact:

Vicky Mamczasz

Family Supports Facilitator

Email: vmamczasz@psd70.ab.ca

Caring Friends Bereavement Support Group

Caring Friends is a confidential and informal (drop-in) bereavement support group led by trained bereavement counsellors. Participants have an opportunity to share their feelings and understand the emotions associated with grief in a safe, supportive environment.

First Thursday of each month - 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. - [Forest Green Plaza, #107, 4613-52 Avenue in Stony Plain](#)
Free, drop-in - For more information call 780-963-8583

Grief and Loss Support



Appointments can be made by contacting Cheryl Salter-Roberts, Manager, Grief Support Services at 780.690.6135.

Living with Loss to Suicide

This self-help group supports its participants through listening, sharing and caring. It offers a shared experience, strength and hope. Last Monday of each month - 7:00 p.m. - Spruce Grove FCSS at 105, [505 Queen Street](#)

Are you in need of Christmas Dinner?

This Christmas Food for the Soul (Lighthouse Church) is providing a free take-out, hot Christmas dinner in conjunction with New Life Church that will be picked up on Dec 25 from 11 am -1pm at New Life Community Church. 5009 - 51 ave in Stony Plain.

Event Link

www.lhpc.ca

Dates

December 25, 2020, 11:00 am to
December 25, 2020, 1:00 pm

Contact

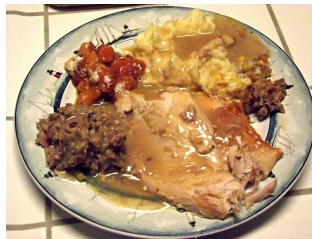
Jackie, Janet and Susan. you can find them on the food for the soul facebook page.

Location

5009-51 ave, Stony Plain
Stony Plain, AB, CA

Register at:

<https://tithe.ly/event-registration/#/2784951>



COVID-19 Online Resources

Supports

[Text4Hope](#) - Free daily text messaging services, evidence-based tool that helps people identify and adjust the negative thoughts, feelings and behaviours a pandemic might be expected to provoke

- To subscribe text COVID19HOPE to 393939.

[Healthy Together](#) (click anywhere on the box to reach the site)

- A guide to family and home life during COVID-19

[Mental Wellness Moment with Dr. Nicholas Mitchell](#) - Videos on topics including how to deal with stress and talking to kids about COVID-19

[Virtual Mental Health Supports](#) – Learn more about virtual mental health support, including [Togetherall](#) a free, online network that offers anonymous, peer-to-peer mental health services 24 hours a day, seven days a week

Reach out for support...

Youth Mental Health (Westview Primary Care Network) - call in for an appointment - 780-960 - 9533 ext 221
Community Connector -Simonne Massner - 780-221-7973 Stony Plain and Prab Gill - Spruce Grove and Greater Parkland area 780-217-8701

Youth Mental Health - Northgate Walk In Clinic (AHS - now call in or virtual appointment)780-342-2700

MOBILE/AFTERHOURS CRISIS TEAM: 780-407-1000

Mobile Addictions Support - Lisa Kimmerly - 780-868-1895

Parenting support (APFA) - Triple P Parenting - Rebecca Plante - 780-963-0549

Adult Crisis Response - 780-342-7777

Support Network Distress Line - 780-482-4357

Adult Mental Health Referral and Treatment - 780-424-2424

Parkland School Division - Family Support - Vicky Mamczasz - vmamczasz@psd70.ab.ca

Sunrise Supports - Dena Davis - dgdavis@psd70.ab.ca

If you are in need of social or financial supports over the holiday and you are unable to reach someone please call 211.

The Distress Line is open 24 hours a day - 780-482-HELP (4357)

Resources and support - from CAMH

[Grief & Bereavement \(Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre\)](#)

[COVID-19 Resources ToolKit \(Spectrum\)](#)

[The Discomfort You're Feeling Is Grief \(Harvard Business Review\)](#)

[Grief and COVID-19: Mourning our Bygone Lives \(American Psychological Association\)](#)

[Grief Resources During COVID-19 \(Families First\)](#)

[Understanding Grief in the Age of the COVID-19 Pandemic \(Verywell Mind\)](#)

[How 'Anticipatory Grief' May Show Up during the COVID-19 Outbreak \(Healthline\)](#)

[Coping Strategies & Trauma \(PTSD Association of Canada\)](#)

[4 Ways to Practice Trauma-Informed Healing During COVID-19 \(Crisis and Trauma Institute of Canada\)](#)

[Helping Healthcare Workers Cope with COVID-19-related Trauma \(Anxiety Canada\)](#)