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2021

### Dealing with Grief During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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#### Recommended Citation

Fleming, Rita; Reeves, Kane; Harris, Beatrice; Conrad, Katie; and Machara, Margaret, "Dealing with Grief During the COVID-19 Pandemic" (2021). *Extension Publications*. 60.

<https://digitalscholarship.tnstate.edu/extension/60>

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## COPING WITH COVID-19

### How to Cope with Bereavement During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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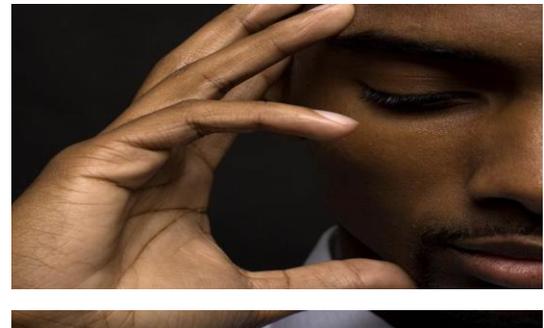
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### **Grieving the loss of a loved one may be especially challenging right now**

Grieving the loss of a loved one may be especially challenging right now. We live in highly uncertain times, and we are surrounded by [fear](#), [anxiety](#), and illness. But this pandemic will be especially stressful if already grieving the loss of a loved one. Some of the reasons for increased stress may include:

- A greater sense of [loneliness](#) as a result of social distancing and inability to receive in-person support from friends and family.
- A decrease in activity levels which may lead to more "thinking" time and a reduced ability to use hobbies and interests as helpful distractions.
- A reduction in life stability resulting from high levels of social, health, and occupational uncertainty, reducing



stability in life as you grieve, which can create difficulty planning for the future.

- Increased fear of further loss due to the frequent reports about illness and death.

### **COPING STRATEGIES**

Here are some suggestions to help support your well-being while grieving during the pandemic:

**Acknowledge that grieving** at this time is more challenging than coping with loss outside a health crisis.

**Practice self-compassion over self**

**criticism.** Signs of self-criticism might be beliefs like "I should be doing better than this" or "I am failing to keep it together." Self-compassion reframes beliefs to be more empathetic to offer encouragement, such as "I am going through a tough time, so I am going to take a time out to care for myself."

**Acknowledge the additional stress.**

Failing to acknowledge the additional stress associated with the pandemic runs the risk of placing blame on something that is out of your control.

**Stay connected to others.** Connection is very important if you are grieving AND socially isolated. Often we don't feel like



talking to others after losing a loved one. If you lack

this [motivation](#), book times for phone calls

and video chats. Arrange these conversations as appointments you must keep. Agree on times with people in advance so you are more likely to follow through.

**Alternate between "loss" and**

**"restorative" activities.** This idea comes from the dual-process approach to grief which says that people move between loss-related activities (e.g., looking at photos of the deceased, crying, talking about the person) and restorative exercises (e.g., making plans for the future, spending time on hobbies).

**Minimizing the time you spend watching the news.** It is sensible to be aware of major announcements by government and health officials. Outside of that, don't watch the news if it increases your stress levels.

You might find it useful to think about how your lost loved one would like you to respond in these circumstances. You can use this exercise to help generate coping strategies.

## SUMMING UP

Everyone is living under difficult and stressful circumstances. The pandemic will be especially challenging for the bereaved. Having a clear coping plan is essential, and some of the strategies suggested above may form a part of that plan.

For General Health Information: [cdc.gov](https://www.tn.gov/health/cedep/ncov.html)

TN COVID-19 Information: <https://www.tn.gov/health/cedep/ncov.html>

TN Mental Health Hotline: 1-855-274-7471

TN Addiction and Recovery Hotline: 1-800-889-9789

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