

Coping with grief and loss when returning to work

COVID-19 has led to grief for many people – for the loss of daily routines, the loss of social habits and human connections, the loss of employment and financial security, and the loss of loved ones. The pandemic has also changed the way we grieve. The unexpected death of a loved one, not being able to be with a family member during their final hours, or the inability to attend a funeral have all added to people’s pain and loneliness.

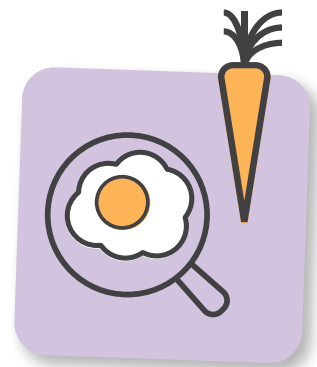
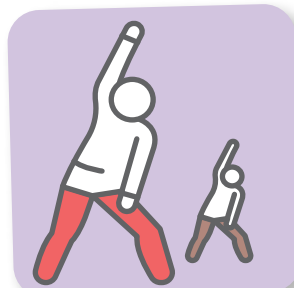
As you return to a potentially changed workplace, you may be faced with additional grief over the loss of how things used to be. You may grieve the loss of casual interactions with colleagues now that physical distancing guidelines make it harder to connect. If colleagues have been laid off, you may miss their presence. And if a colleague has died due to COVID-19, you may grieve that loss.

Following loss, grief is normal. Yet we all grieve differently. If you are grieving, it’s important to seek support and stay

connected to people you trust. Being able to share your pain, other feelings and memories while receiving support will make you feel less alone. At times, just crying and having someone with you is enough to provide solace. Some people find their religion or spirituality gives them comfort. Others find support groups helpful in reminding them they are not alone.

It can be helpful to identify and name the range of your thoughts and emotions. Knowing what they are can help you to accept them as normal. The more grounded you feel in reality, the more you will be able to stay in balance, and build your strength and resilience.

However, during difficult times we are more likely to ignore our needs or use unhealthy ways of coping. For this reason it is particularly important to be kind to yourself and engage in self care. Ensure you stay hydrated, eat healthy meals and plan meaningful activities each day, including exercise if you can.



This information sheet is not intended to be a resource for people who require screening for COVID-19 or who are experiencing a mental health crisis. If you are experiencing a mental health crisis, please call 911 immediately or go to your nearest emergency department.

For more information, visit www.camh.ca/covid19

When should I seek professional help?

For most people, the worry and grief that come with change and loss are normal. But you may consider seeking professional help if over time your intense emotions and pain get worse, you have more difficulty coping, or you start to develop mental health symptoms. These symptoms may include:

- a change in your mood where you feel sad and down most of the day, nearly every day
- excessive anxiety that you have difficulty managing
- difficulty managing any negative emotions
- drastic changes in your sleep, appetite or concentration that get worse over time
- difficulty in setting new tasks or activities, or in taking care of your responsibilities
- engaging more in substance use to reduce your distress
- any other symptoms that cause you distress or interfere with your functioning.

Effective treatments are available through a variety of platforms such as virtual therapy, telemedicine, or in person. Remember that you are not alone, and that we all need help sometimes. Visit our resources on loss, grief and healing www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-health-and-covid-19/loss-grief-and-healing.

