

BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Protecting Brain Health: Dealing with the Grief of What is Still to Come

Many of us associate grief with the feelings and emotions we experience when we lose someone close. But grief is much more than that. We experience grief when dealing with any kind of loss. And then there is anticipatory grief — what we feel when we know there is more loss on the horizon.

Our current situation with COVID-19 has triggered feelings of grief in most of us: grief for those people we have lost to the coronavirus; grief for the loss of normalcy in our day-to-day life; and perhaps most of all, the fear of those losses that are still ahead.

A recent post on Healthline.com, *How ‘Anticipatory Grief’ May Show Up During the COVID-19 Outbreak* and the return to new “normalcy”, shares five warning signs of anticipatory grief.

- 1. We’re on edge — and it’s not always clear exactly why:** It might be a sense of dread, persistent anxiety or a feeling of being overwhelmed. This feeling can make it hard to maintain our emotional balance.
- 2. We feel angry at things we can’t control:** Frustration is a common expression of grief. The little things, things that would not have bothered you in the past, are unconscious reminders that things aren’t the same. It’s a normal reaction to our situation.
- 3. We’re resigned to the worst-case scenario:** By mentally and emotionally preparing for the worst we think it won’t be so painful when it happens. Be careful of this sign. Maintaining a high level of emotion can lead to chronic stress. Balance is key.
- 4. We’re exhausted:** All of this stress, fear and anxiety keeps us in a constant state of “fight, flight, or freeze.” The flood of stress hormones that is keeping us ready to react is wearing us down. Exhaustion is a pretty universal grief experience and you are not alone in feeling this way. Do what you can and know that it is enough.
- 5. We withdraw or avoid others:** It may feel like we’re protecting ourselves from their stress and anxiety by avoiding others, but isolation can increase feelings of depression and anxiety. Try to stay connected but set firm boundaries.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

- **Validate your feelings.** As we have discussed in previous posts, feelings are a normal part of the human experience. Take a brain healthy approach and accept without judgement the feelings that you experience. Everyone deals with things in their own way. Be compassionate to yourself.
- **Get back to brain healthy basics.** Stay fed, hydrated, and rested.
- **Connect with others.** Even when you don't want to, connecting with others is important to your brain's health and overall well-being.
- **Make rest and relaxation a priority.** When your anxiety levels are high, it is important to give your body and brain the opportunity to relax.
- **Creatively express yourself.** Brain health is protected when you participate in creative outlets that can help you process what's happening.
- **Talk to a professional.** Online therapy can be an important resource for moving you through your grief and anxiety.

For more information, view the [full article here](#).

Tidewell Community Hope Line

To help meet the emotional-health needs of the community during COVID-19, local hospice provider, Tidewell Hospice, is offering the Tidewell Community Hope Line. This is not a crisis hotline but a "hope" line for people who need help dealing with today's challenges. The service is available 24/7 and is staffed by Tidewell grief specialists, social workers, and spiritual care advisors. The line can be reached at **855-930-HOPE (4673) or 941-556-HOPE (4673)**. (La Línea de Esperanza para La Comunidad esta disponible en Español.) Assistance is also available via email at communityhope@tidewell.org

Changing Lives Together - Careline

It's common to feel stressed or anxious during these challenging times. Many people are experiencing increased levels of stress, fear and anxiety. The need for social distancing makes it harder to access our normal social supports. Being in contact with people who can relate to your experiences is comforting. Centerstone's CareLine can help you learn about coping skills, find resources, and feel supported. If you or someone you know needs to talk, the team at Centerstone is available to help:

Free and Confidential

24/7 CareLine

941-782-4300/ #CstoneNeverQuits

About the Brain Health Initiative (www.brainhealthinitiative.org)

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is a cutting-edge, new approach to promoting brain health and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. Through education, research, innovation and action the collaboration between Massachusetts General Hospital, a Harvard Medical School Teaching Hospital, and the Academy for Brain Health and Performance intends to build brain healthy communities with cultures that increase brain health protective factors and reduce risk factors, improving brain health and optimizing brain performance outcomes for the Florida Gulf Coast region and beyond. Join the movement, lifestyle makes a difference.

To view all Brain Health Boosts [click here](#).