



FAMILIES

TACKLING TOUGH TIMES

TOGETHER



FAMILY

YOUNG ADULTS

Our Family Will Get Through This! Making Meaning of Adversity

The pandemic has meant loss in some way for everyone. Anything we are attached to as humans can and does result in loss when it is no longer with us. As individuals, thinking about both the losses and gains that may be related to the pandemic can help us make meaning out of our circumstances. As we move through the losses, we should try to honor the complexity of what we are experiencing and know that a key theory of grief ([Stroebe & Schut, 2010](#)) stresses two parts – shifting back and forth between loss and coping.

Each of us (including each of our family members) has experienced losses connected to the pandemic that might include losses of routine, structure, work/life space, productivity, identity, freedom to come and go, community, privacy – and even more tangible losses including death losses and losses of income, access to resources, internships, and planned activities or celebrations. These losses are real, and the grief associated with them is **real**. Grief affects us in many ways including on cognitive, emotional, physiological, social, and spiritual levels – and it is **normal**.

We often hear that grief happens in stages, but that is not true. Grief is not stage based, meaning that it doesn't occur in any step-by-step manner. But there are other thoughts on grief that may be more useful in these particular circumstances. Grief is often considered a meaning making, or sense making, process; it can help us make sense of our lives after different experiences or losses. A helpful quote about grief reads: *Part of grief is loss and part of grief is remaking your life*. It's both. It's grieving the loss, but it's also trying to determine how we understand the loss and how our life stories change and move forward (not move on) from here.

Space is needed for sense-making and moving forward into a new world. Families are strengthened when they are able to have conversations with each other about the ways they're experiencing losses differently, experiencing grief differently, and that it will be unique and different for all of them.

Video and Podcast Resources

- [Association for Death Education and Counseling®: COVID-19 and Non-Death Losses](#)
- [UC Davis Grief and Loss in Wake of the Pandemic](#)
- [TEDTalk: How to Make Stress Your Friend](#)

Internal Actions

- **Using narrative/art of expression:** Consider taking the time to write down, take pictures of, draw, or type out your own losses – and gains – brought on by the pandemic. Focus on the gains and wins along with the losses. Update and reflect on the list as you move forward.

External Actions

- **Mentoring/Coaching:** Take a moment to think about the best mentor you have had. If possible, make a point to talk to them or someone else who has made a difference in your life — with a phone call, an email, or a socially-distanced conversation — someone who was important in your life growing up (a teacher, coach, old neighbor or babysitter) that you think about but maybe haven't actually reached out to and connected with in a long time (or maybe you have but you would like to deepen the relationship). What made that person stand out to you? Now think about what qualities you have to offer others as a mentor. Make a plan to reach out in the community to make a difference, and begin (or continue) your journey in someone else's life.



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College of Health and Human Sciences

Welcome to Families Tackling Tough Times Together!

We hope you find the enclosed ideas and suggestions helpful as you care for your family during the pandemic. We know the pandemic is a very big challenge. How families cope can affect both parents and children for a long time.

We are scientists, educators, and students from Purdue University, and we are here to help! For nine weeks this fall, we will provide weekly collections of ideas for families to use to build on their strengths.

These tools are free, flexible, and informed by science. They are designed for families of all types, with tailored suggestions for children, youth, young adults and older adults, and suitable for both civilian and military families. We hope that your family will try one activity each week!

Would you like to earn financial rewards?

We especially welcome families living in the continental US who are interested in trying out project materials and telling us about their experiences. These families can earn financial rewards by sharing about one hour of their time over the next two months. Sign up now at the link below!

https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3vK1BJq2EiUksAJ

For more information

- Join the Families Together Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/HHSFamiliesTogether/>
- Visit the project website: <https://www.hhs.purdue.edu/families-together/>