



Your Health. Your Decisions.



What's Your New Normal?

Loss, Grief, Resilience and Hope

Believing You Can Cope

Resilience means believing you can cope in the face of major life stressors. *Try to see difficulties as problems to sort through, rather than impossible obstacles. We can't control the fact that change is a part of life and stressful events will continue to happen. It may be necessary to set new goals and accept a new normal. During challenging times, try to find the positive. Focus on the things you can change and give less energy to what you can't.*

-from this [newsletter](#)

That's a good question! You may have dealt with illness or the loss of a loved one, maybe loss of income. Even if you haven't experienced deep loss, everyone has suffered loss on some level. On top of that, how we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic is still unknown. One thing is certain though, the new normal will be different. In the face of change and uncertainty, being resilient (or becoming more resilient) can ease worry and bring hope to challenging times.

Loss and Grief

Seeing movies with people in close contact or pictures of family gatherings reminds us of the way things were just a few short months ago. We are all mourning the loss of familiar routines like going to work, taking kids to school, visiting friends and family, eating at a restaurant, and getting our hair cut!

It's unsettling not to be free to move about the way we used to. The loss of income and the pandemic's effect on the economy are major worries. We are concerned about loved ones in hospitals and nursing homes, and those across town or states away. Education has been disrupted, graduations are off, weddings postponed and other major (and minor) events cancelled indefinitely. There's been so much change to our livelihood and sense of community.

Most people connect grief to the loss of a loved one, but smaller losses can cause grief too. Grief is a natural reaction to loss. It's that feeling you get when something or someone is missing. It's common to experience unexpected emotions like shock, anger, guilt and profound sadness. Grief can cause nausea or upset stomach, fast heartbeat, fatigue, headaches or other physical symptoms. Everyone grieves differently so the way you feel and how long it takes will be unique to you. For some, grief may be delayed, showing up out of the blue weeks or months later. It might be triggered by another type of loss or because the intensity of the pandemic has passed.

The process of grieving can affect your ability to sleep, eat and think straight. One way to help yourself emotionally is to take care of yourself physically while grieving. Seek out time to talk with trusted friends or family about your feelings and challenges, even if by phone, video or at a safe distance.

Resilience and Hope

With so many unknowable answers to questions about the future and circumstances beyond our control, it helps to focus on what we can control. Adapting to change and stressful situations is called resilience. If your resilience could stand a little dusting off, here are a few



Ways to Stay Safe

During these unusual times, everyone's gotten smarter about germs and how they are spread (see last month's [newsletter](#)). To help you and your family stay safe, try to stick to these habits:

- Wear a mask. It needn't be a N95 mask used by healthcare workers. It can be made from cloth or paper. By wearing one, you help protect others from germs you may be carrying. Wearing a mask also helps keep you from touching your face with hands that may have come in contact with contaminated surfaces. Replace or wash masks after use.
- Wash, wash, wash your hands. You've heard it before, keep doing it! Especially after touching elevator buttons, pumping gas, handling money/credit cards and other germ-y surfaces. Try to carry hand-sanitizer or wipes, which can substitute when soap and water aren't available.
- Keep shared surfaces clean and disinfected.
- Wear gloves when grocery shopping or handling mail. Replace or wash gloves after use.

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steps you can take to build strength for adjusting to the times:

- Plan for what you can. Don't expect perfect solutions to every challenge but look for different ways of doing what you used to do. Let go of less important tasks and focus on higher priority items.
- Keep up on the news but limit your exposure. Repeated exposure to the news can be upsetting. It's important to stay aware of coronavirus developments, but take breaks from watching, reading or listening to news stories (that includes social media!). When you do seek news, stick to trusted sources of information, like the Centers for Disease Control ([CDC](#)) and your local public health authorities.
- Connect with your people (even when physically distant). Call your family and friends, or have FaceTime, Zoom or other video visits. Reconnect with old friends or colleagues. Staying in contact with people can ease stress and anxiety. Be sure to talk about subjects other than the coronavirus. It's important to laugh, share stories and focus on what else is happening in your lives.
- Take care of yourself. Maintain a routine as best you can. Try to work, eat and sleep at regular times. Make time for enjoyable activities, like reading and watching a comedy. Get outside if possible; a walk around your neighborhood or park can clear your head. Just avoid getting too close to others. Speaking of walking, it and other forms of exercise help relieve stress and lift your mood. You may not be able to go to the gym or attend classes, but you can still bike, hike or take virtual classes online. Mowing the grass, climbing steps and dancing are forms of exercise too.
- Take care of yourself, part 2. Try to eat healthy meals. It's tempting to eat starchy, sugary comfort foods during difficult times, but these foods tend to leave you feeling worse (after you initially enjoy eating them). Instead, shoot for well-balanced meals including chicken and fish, fruits, vegetables, healthy oils and nuts.
- Take care of yourself, part 3. Sleeping 7-9 hours each night is essential for good health. It is the time when our bodies recover from the work (and stress) of the day. Without adequate sleep, it's hard to think clearly and bring renewed energy to solving challenges.
- Recognize when you need help. If the stressors of the current situation feel greater than you can manage, reach out for help. Family, friends, counselors, providers, employer-sponsored Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) and KnovaSolutions are good options. The National Suicide Hotline is always open: 800/273-8255.
- Help others. You can make a difference in your community by helping others in need. At the same time, you'll be giving meaning and purpose to your days. This will help you regain a sense of control over the situation. You might deliver groceries to an elderly person, donate to food banks, send notes of thanks to healthcare workers and/or reach out to someone who may be more isolated than you. You may be able to help by simply being a calming influence when people seem stressed: be positive, focus on other things (besides the news), help problem-solve or listen attentively to their worries.

By focusing on what is within your control and taking care of yourself (and others), you are bound to feel more hopeful. As always, KnovaSolutions is available to lend a helping hand. Our clinicians can help you and your family members develop or fine tune resilience skills. Call **800/355-0885** Monday to Friday, 8 am-8 pm, MT.