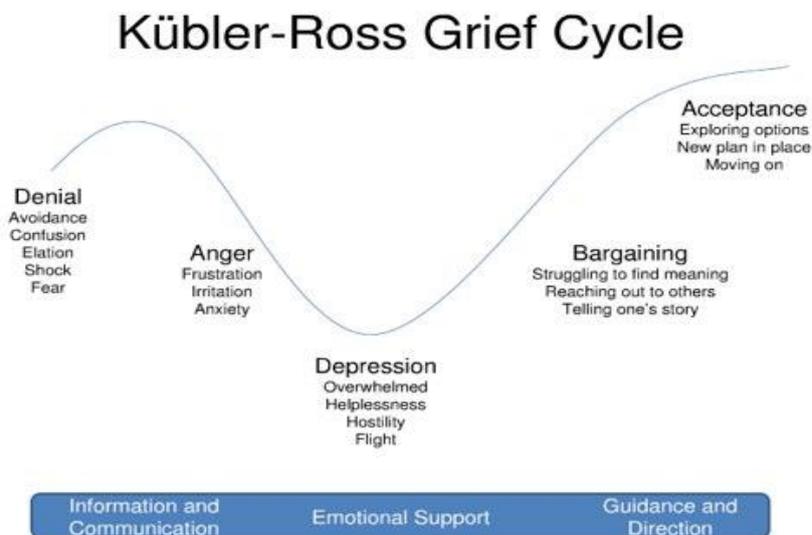


Bereavement in during the time of a pandemic

Losing a loved one is always difficult. Grief tends to have a series of phases, although people often move forwards and backwards through these phases rather than move them in a neat order. The diagram below shows the typical phases of grief.



Losing a loved one from the coronavirus or complication of the virus is likely to have additional complications to other bereavements.

Many people are unable to spend time with their loved one who is dying or unable to say goodbye in person due to infection control measures in the hospital. This can increase the natural sense of disbelief that someone has died. There may also be feelings of guilt and anger about not having been able to be there to care for their loved one at their end of life.

In some cases, the person's illness may have become serious very quickly. This can intensify feelings of shock and disbelief that the loved one has died. This may be made worse by not having been present for the death or not being able to do some of the normal things following a bereavement such as viewing the body. Also the current restrictions on funerals means that many people are unable attend if a funeral is able to take place which can make acceptance of the person's death more difficult.

Another difficulty is that the bereaved person may have been exposed to distressing images or stories in the media around people dying of coronavirus. Or they may have witnessed distressing scenes directly. These can experiences can lead to unwanted images which may be distressing to the bereaved person.

What to do

Grieving while in isolation is difficult. Reaching out to other is recommended when bereaved but this is more difficult during the current pandemic. Using remote forms of communication such as video calling to connect with friends and family is one way to reduce your isolation during this time. Another option is to access a helpline such as Cruse's National Bereavement helpline.

If you are feeling very distressed, try to talk to someone that you trust to get support. If these feelings are strong and persistent, speaking to your GP is advised as they can direct you to specialist services if needed. Below are some other useful contacts.

Where to get help

Cruse Bereavement Care are a national charity and have a number of helpful articles on their website which can be accessed at www.cruse.org.uk .

The local Cruse Bereavement website is www.crusenortheast.org.uk

Their free National Helpline is 0808 808 1677