Trauma-Informed Toolbox Strategy Session:
Honoring Grief and Loss During a Pandemic

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We’re talking about grieving a living loss — one that keeps going and going.

(Robert Neimeyer, 2020)
What is Grief?

Grief is a natural response to loss—a strong, sometimes overwhelming reaction, that may include:

- Feeling sad
- Feeling empty or numb
- Feeling angry
- Heartache
- Confusion
- Physical reactions, such as weakness, nausea, trouble sleeping, etc.
Grief Myth #1: Everyone Grieves in Predictable “Stages”

• Everyone grieves differently.

• Some people go through stages like:
  o denial, anger, bargaining, sadness, and/or acceptance

• There is no recipe for grief.
Grief Myth #2: Grief and Mourning Are the Same

• Grief is defined as the emotional state related to the loss of something or someone.

• Grief includes all of the emotions that the bereaved feel; the numbness, acute emotional pain, anger, and so on.

• Mourning includes the actions that come from grief.

• Mourning is how the person going through the grief process expresses it.

For example: a person that is in mourning may choose to wear black clothing, fast for a certain period, write in a journal, or follow certain cultural rites.
Grief Myth #3: Grief has an End Point

• Grief is not something that simply goes away.

• The face of grief is ever-changing.

• Grief is often triggered by external reminders.

• It is not something one “will eventually get over” but is instead something one integrates into self.
Tips to Manage Grief and Loss

- Balance bad thoughts with good
- Admit the feelings
- Build a realistic sense of hope
- Stock up on compassion
- Set up a routine that includes a balance between loss-related and restorative activities
- Maintain boundaries re: news/social media
- Find time to rest and be still
- Focus on what you can control
- Social connection
- General healthy habits
- Help others
Old Self & World View

Possible Loss of:
- Normalcy
- Predictability
- Connection
- Feeling Safe
- Loved Ones

Current Self & World View

Future Self & World View

Meaning Making:
- Relating to Others
- New Possibilities
- Personal Strength
- Spiritual Change
- Appreciation of Life

(The Institute on Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care, 2020)
How well are you honoring grief and loss?

1 = not well                   5 = half-way there                   10 = very well

What will it take to get just one point higher on the scale?
Additional Resources Re: Grief and Loss

• American Psychological Association – *Grieving Life and Loss*

• Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress – *Grief Leadership During COVID-19*

• Harvard Business Review – *That Discomfort You’re Feeling Is Grief*

• Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network – *Grief: Cultural Responsiveness*

• Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network – *Evidence-Based Treatments for Grief*

• NYS Office of Mental Health – *Reminders When Coping With Grief*

• NYS Office of Mental Health – *Ten Tips for Helping Others Grieve*

• Very Well Mind – *Understanding Grief in the COVID-19 Pandemic*