**Reactions to the Pandemic are Normal, like Grief: How Do We Get Through?**

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In this time of pandemic, all that you are feeling right now is likely a normal reaction to a very abnormal situation. A pandemic is not something we have experienced before. There is so much uncertainty. We have lost our normal routines, our normal way of connecting socially and our sense of certainty with the predictability of our day-to-day lives. Some of us may have lost jobs, income, school, a place of belonging and the ability to celebrate milestones in the usual way (birthdays, holidays, etc.). It can feel like you’ve been robbed of what matters. If you have ever lost someone or something important to you, you know grief. What we are experiencing now is a different kind of loss, but it is most definitely loss.

**Common Reactions**:

*Shock/Disbelief*

Initially you may have thought, “It’s not that bad,” or “It won’t affect me.” You may continue to feel detached or as though this can’t really be happening. This is our mind’s way of trying to cope with an overwhelming reality.

*Sadness/Depression*

You are likely missing your friends and the ability to be together in person. You may also be missing a sense of purpose, focus and meaning that often comes from school or work. You may be more fatigued than usual.

*Anxiety/Fear*

Worry about your own health and others. Uncertainty. There may be tightness in your chest or appetite changes.

*Anger/Irritability*

Your life has changed without your consent. You may be challenged to find compassion toward yourself or others.

**Ways to take care of yourself**:

Eat, drink, sleep and PLAY well. Find some enjoyable physical movement. What nurtures you?

Go outside. Nature can be healing and remind us of beauty.

Find daily routine. Make plans. It helps to have a sense of purpose as well as something to look forward to.

Socialize. Use your favorite video platform (FaceTime, Zoom, etc.). Remind yourself that you are not alone.

Now is an especially good time to respect your limits. Say YES to things that feel good, that give you a sense of accomplishment and purpose. Say NO to things that leave you feeling aimless and depleted.

Validate your feelings. Acknowledge them and allow for some time to experience them. This will let your feelings naturally organize themselves and move through you. Your feelings will change.

Write it out, draw it out, talk it out. Out is better than in.

Let go of what you can’t control (what your neighbor is doing). Focus on what you can (physical distancing).

Stay in the present. When your mind projects into the future with catastrophic stories, try to also imagine positive outcomes. Ground yourself in the present by taking some relaxing breaths. This will pass.

Take care of something. Walk or brush a pet, water a plant, send someone a letter or gift in the mail.

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\*If you or your loved one is experiencing a life threatening emergency please dial 911. If you are experiencing a crisis call 911, King County Crisis Connections at (206) 461-3222, the crisis TEXT line-  (741-741) with HELP or HELLO,  or go to the nearest emergency department.