That Discomfort You’re Feeling Is Grief

NAME YOUR EMOTION:
By Naming your emotions, you can better manage them. The name you might be looking for to manage this is GRIEF. There is something powerful about naming what we are feeling as grief. It helps us to feel what is inside of us. When you name it, you feel it and it can move through you. EMOTIONS NEED MOTION. It is important to acknowledge what we go through. When you acknowledge the grief you are experiencing, you can manage it and then find meaning in it.

UNDERSTAND THE STAGES OF GRIEF:
There are 6 stages of grief. The stages are not linear and can happen in any order.

DENIAL (Often happens early on)- This virus won’t affect us.

ANGER- You’re making me stay home and taking away my activities.

BARGAINING- Okay, if I social distance for two weeks everything will be better, right?

SADNESS- I don’t know when this will ever end.

ACCEPTANCE- This is happening and I have to figure out how to proceed.

MEANING- We often find meaning and light in our darkest hours. Realize what you can do, look for the good and appreciate what you have.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF GRIEF AND HOW TO COPE:
Right now it is normal to feel a number of different GRIEFS. We feel the world has changed, because it has. Though we know this is temporary, it doesn’t feel that way and we realize things will be different. After 9/11, our way of doing things changed, such as going to the airport. We know things will change and this is the point at which they change. It is a loss of normalcy, the fear of the economic toll, and the loss of connection. It affects us all and we are grieving collectively. This is not something we are used to or that we have ever experienced.

Anticipatory Grief is a feeling we get about what the future holds when we’re uncertain. This is generally centered on death such as a dire diagnosis or when we have a normal thought about losing a parent someday. We know a storm is coming, or that there is something bad out there. With a virus, this type of grief is confusing for us. Our mind
knows something bad is happening, but you can’t see it so our sense of safety is broken. We all feel the loss of safety, and this is something new to experience. We are grieving on multiple levels.

Unhealthy anticipatory grief presents as anxiety. Our mind tries to protect us by showing us images such as parents getting sick, or the worst-case scenarios. We shouldn’t ignore those images or try to make them go away as your mind won’t let you do that and it can be painful to force it. The goal is to find balance in the things you are thinking. If you feel the worst image taking shape, make yourself think of the best image—such as—We all get a little sick and the world continues—Not everyone I love dies—Maybe no one does because we are all taking the right steps. Neither scenario should be ignored, but neither should dominate either.

To calm yourself from anticipatory grief (also known as ANXIETY) you want to come into the present. This can be done through mindfulness or meditation, or by simply naming 5 things in the room. Take a deep breath and realize you are in the present moment, and nothing you have anticipated has happened. Remind yourself in this moment you are okay, you have food, and you are not sick. Use your senses to think about what they feel. This helps to dampen some of that pain.

You can also think about ways to let go of what you can’t control. Remind yourself you can’t control what your neighbors are doing. However, staying 6 feet away from them is in your control. Focus on that.

Now is a good time to stock up on compassion. Fear and grief looks different in everyone. Recognize that everyone might be at different stages in their grief. Someone being snippy toward you, or overly emotional. It is all normal. Recognize that they are mostly likely experiencing fear and anxiety. Be patient with others. Think about who someone usually is, and not who they are in this moment.

Remember, this is a temporary state. It can help to say that out loud. The precautions we are taking are the right ones as history tells us that. We can and will survive this. This is a time to overprotect but not overreact.

Let yourself feel the grief and KEEP GOING.

YOU CAN DO HARD THINGS!