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Back2Normal

Grief literacy and core beliefs after the pandemic

Module 1.2. Back to Normal: Life skills for health and well-being

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What is grief literacy?

- ▶ Grief literacy is knowledge to facilitate understanding of grief and loss, skills to enable supportive action, and values of compassion and care.
- ▶ Bereaved people and those who are supporting them need grief literacy. This includes understanding of grief responses, diversity in coping strategies, the dismantling of our most commonly held myths and misconceptions.

Grief literacy

The capacity for grief literacy is something we all need to develop after the pandemic.



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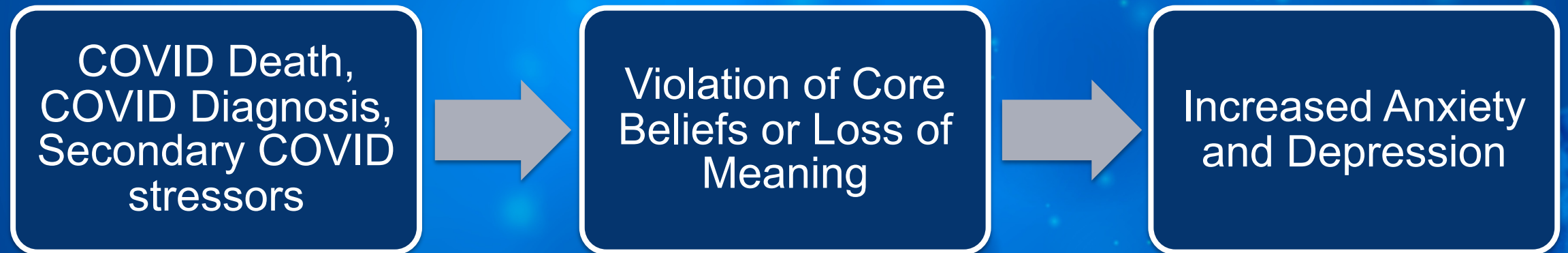
Everyone has a basic view of the world. These beliefs encompass the idea that the world is basically benevolent and that life is meaningful. Death, especially traumatic death, can rupture these core beliefs.

Core beliefs



How has COVID pandemic violated our core beliefs?

COVID-19 violation of core beliefs



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“We are ready and willing to shoulder
any suffering as long as we can see a
meaning in it”

Victor Frankl

Stages of Grief



Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, 1969



Let's review some concepts

1. Denial

Denial is a common defence mechanism. It may help buffer the immediate shock. At first, people might doubt the reality of the loss.

2. Anger

Pain from a loss is often redirected and expressed as anger. Feeling angry at strangers, friends, or family members is not uncommon.

3. Bargaining

Bargaining helps hold on to hope. People are willing to sacrifice everything to restore their life to how it was before the loss.

4. Depression

You start facing reality and the inevitability of the loss. This realization may lead you to feel intense sadness and despair.

5. Acceptance

You acknowledge the losses you've experienced, learn to live with them, and readjust your life accordingly.

Common misconceptions about grieving

'I am doing it wrong'

Grieving isn't about going over or following a set list of steps. It's a unique and multidimensional healing journey.

'I should be feeling...'

Not everyone experiences all the above-mentioned stages or even goes through these emotions the same way.

'It's taking too long'

Coping with a loss is a deeply personal experience. Some people navigate through grief in a few days. Others take months to process their loss.

'I'm depressed'

Even though some symptoms might be similar, there are key differences between both. In grief, the intense sadness will lessen in intensity and frequency as time goes by.

'This goes first'

There's no specific or linear order for the stages of grief. You could move along the stages one by one, or you could go back and forth.

How to cope with grief?

Connect with other people

- ▶ Invite people to call you or host conference calls with family members and friends to stay connected
- ▶ Ask family and friends to share stories and pictures with you via mailed letters, email, apps or social media
- ▶ Coordinate a date and time for family and friends to honour your loved one by sharing memories via videoconference



How to cope with grief?

Create memories or rituals

- ▶ Develop a virtual memory book, blog, or webpage to remember your loved one, and ask family and friends to contribute their memories and stories.
- ▶ Take part in an activity, such as planting a tree or preparing a favourite meal, that has significance to you and the loved one who died.



How to cope with grief?

Asking for help from others

- ▶ Seek out grief counselling or mental health services, support groups, or hotlines that can be offered over the phone or online.
- ▶ Seek spiritual support from religious leaders and congregations, if applicable.
- ▶ Seek support from trusted community leaders and friends.



Help children cope with grief

- ▶ Ask questions to determine the child's emotional state.
- ▶ Give children permission to grieve by allowing time to express thoughts or feelings in creative ways.
- ▶ Provide age-appropriate answers.
- ▶ Practice calming and coping strategies with your child.
- ▶ Take care of yourself.
- ▶ Maintain routines as much as possible.
- ▶ Spend time with your child, reading, colouring, or doing other activities they enjoy.



When to reach out for help

- ▶ You need to go back to school or work and have a hard time concentrating.
- ▶ You're the sole or main guardian for someone else.
- ▶ You're experiencing physical discomfort or pain.
- ▶ You're skipping meals or medications because you don't feel like getting up or doing anything.
- ▶ Your emotions are increasing in intensity and frequency instead of lessening over time.
- ▶ You've thought about hurting others or yourself.



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