

Covid 19: A Source of Personal and Communal Grief

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When I meet with grief clients, I ask them about their losses. They inevitably share stories of loved ones who have died; parents, spouses, friends... often catastrophic losses. "What about other losses?" I will say. "*None-death* losses?" This gives them pause to reflect. At first blush they may suggest that they have not had many losses. A few minutes of conversation, however, reveals a life that has been replete with loss.

We often forget to honor the grief that may arise from non-death losses. Moving away from a community; end of a relationship; ending of a dream or goal; loss of safety, identity, voice; these changes, and countless others, can also be catastrophic.

The Covid 19 pandemic is one such change. Its affect ripples across continents, countries, cities and families. Almost nobody on earth is left untouched. Close to home, we are facing unprecedented financial, social, and structural challenges. For good or ill, who we were as a society prior to Covid 19 no longer exists.

That is a very real source of a tremendous grief. In our fear and anxiety over the Covid contagion, our self isolation and social distancing, and the resulting loss of income, sorrow wraps around us – individually, communally.

This grief, as with any grieving that comes upon us, will run its course, Emotions will arise to batter us, in waves small and tsunamis towering. Despair and sadness will oxidize the metal of our being. Sorrow, that great master of transformation, is already at work among and within us. In light of this, how are we to cooperate with sorrow so that we can emerge from our grief cocoons deepened, stronger, growing?

You may consider the following:

- *Create a ritual*: when we experience loss, the emerging grief needs to be heard. Ritual is a supportive way to give voice to grief.
- *Write* a poem or song, journal, pen a letter to a friend, blog. Find a way to say what you are feeling that is true for you. Share your writing, or burn it, or keep it. Read it, re-read it. Treasure it.
- *Invite your creative energy* to speak for you – dance, paint, build... and let what you create be a reflection of the loss that has taken residence in your being.
- *Acknowledge*, without judgement, how you feel. Do your best to name the feelings of loss that arise.
- *Find joy* in the moment. Sorrow is not only about difficult feelings; sorrow also has space for wonder, playfulness, peace, and gratitude.

Finally, remember to get some fresh air, a little exercise, purposefully enact some acts of kindness, and connect, in whatever way works for you, with your village. Phone, text, email, snail mail, facetime... whatever, just reach out.

Hospice is available for phone conversations about grief and loss. If you need support do not hesitate to call our office at 780.608.0636.

Grieve deeply for what has been taken from us. Anticipate with joy the gifts that will arise from our sorrow.