



# Coronavirus

## Leading in Times of Grief, Loss and Illness

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected everyone in some way. Social distancing, stay-at-home recommendations and the use of personal protective equipment have changed the way we deal with illness, loss and grief.

People who have lost loved ones are experiencing challenges with typical grieving responses. Not being able to gather for a funeral or comfort loved ones can make the loss even more traumatic for families. The inability to visit family in the hospital or even those battling illness at home can leave us feeling helpless and upset. As we emerge from this pandemic, leaders will need to maintain good communication, understand people are struggling and be aware of the fear of re-occurring illness, loss and grief.

### Common losses caused by COVID-19:

- Connections with others
- Jobs and financial security
- Sense of freedom and hope
- Feelings of safety and security
- Involvement in regular activities
- Death

### Ways leaders can provide support:

- Try to connect with genuine care, compassion and understanding.
- Be sensitive to those who have experienced the loss of a loved one and may not be able to grieve.
- Use empathy to normalize emotions and reinforce resilience.
- Ask questions such as, “I know we have a lot going on right now. How are you doing?” or “That was upsetting news. How can I support you?”
- Notice changes in mood and behavior and offer support.
- Be mindful of your own emotions as a leader and practice self-care.
- Watch for individuals who may have a difficult time bouncing back.

We often think of grief only in relation to death, but people can have a grief-like response to any type of loss. Some common grieving responses include denial, anger, isolation, fear, anxiety, depression and feeling overwhelmed. As a leader, it is important to be aware of these signs of grief so that you can manage with empathy and resilience. When you recognize that your employees are showing signs of grief, you can help guide them to resources for help, such as your EAP.

As always, your EAP is here for you and your family. Whether you are staying home or continuing your routine, there are a variety of ways to connect with your EAP including: telephone 800-327-4968 (800-EAP-4YOU), TTY: 877-492-7341, online at [EAP4YOU.com](https://www.eap4you.com), through video, live chat or text message. Reach out to learn more about the many ways you can receive support from your Employee Assistance Program.