

Coronavirus

Dealing with Survivor Guilt

Following the loss of a co-worker during the COVID-19 health crisis, fellow teammates can experience a range of emotions. Reactions can include sadness, grief, fear and compassion. Often people also feel a sense of relief. This is a normal reaction which can include thoughts similar to, "I am so glad my family and I are okay."

Some individuals will experience a phenomenon known as "survivor guilt," a feeling experienced by survivors of COVID-19 as this global pandemic has taken the lives of many others. This guilt can occur in individuals directly impacted by a loss on their team, as well as individuals who work at distant facilities.

Common Thoughts & Questions:

- Why did others have to die while I live?
- What could have been done to prevent this?
- Why do bad things happen to good people?
- Why couldn't it have been me instead?
- How could God let this happen?
- Why couldn't we all survive?

Emotional & Physical Symptoms Associated with Survivor Guilt:

- Anxiety and depression
- Fear and helplessness
- Nightmares and/or sleeplessness
- Loss of motivation
- Decrease in self-care
- Increase in irritability or agitation
- Thoughts about the meaning of life
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Obsessing about the pandemic
- Difficulty getting along with others
- Feeling immobilized
- Feeling numb, disconnected
- Headache, stomachache
- Racing heart, dizziness
- Desire to hurt yourself
- Thoughts of suicide

How You Can Cope with Feelings of Survivor Guilt:

- Remind yourself that you're not alone in your feelings and that this is a normal reaction to the current pandemic.
- Be patient with healing. Know that recovering from tragedy and loss takes time.
- Know there is no offense in surviving. Everyone is happy you are okay even though unfortunately others are not.
- Talk to people you trust. Share your feelings and get support.
- Plan a memorial. Think of ways to memorialize the deceased and cherish your memories of them.
- Embrace your religion for support. Speak with your priest, pastor, rabbi or congregation.
- Ask for and accept the help of others. Don't feel like you are alone in this global health crisis.
- Keep to a daily routine even though you are going through a difficult time.
- Maintain healthy rituals. Eat balanced meals and make sure to get enough rest.
- Exercise regularly. Even just a little physical activity can positively impact your overall mood.

This is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation. For the latest information visit [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).

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.