

Coping with Grief and Loss

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Black Mental Wellness

April 28, 2022, 1:00 PM



Central East (HHS Region 3)

MHTTC

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network

Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

MHTTC Network

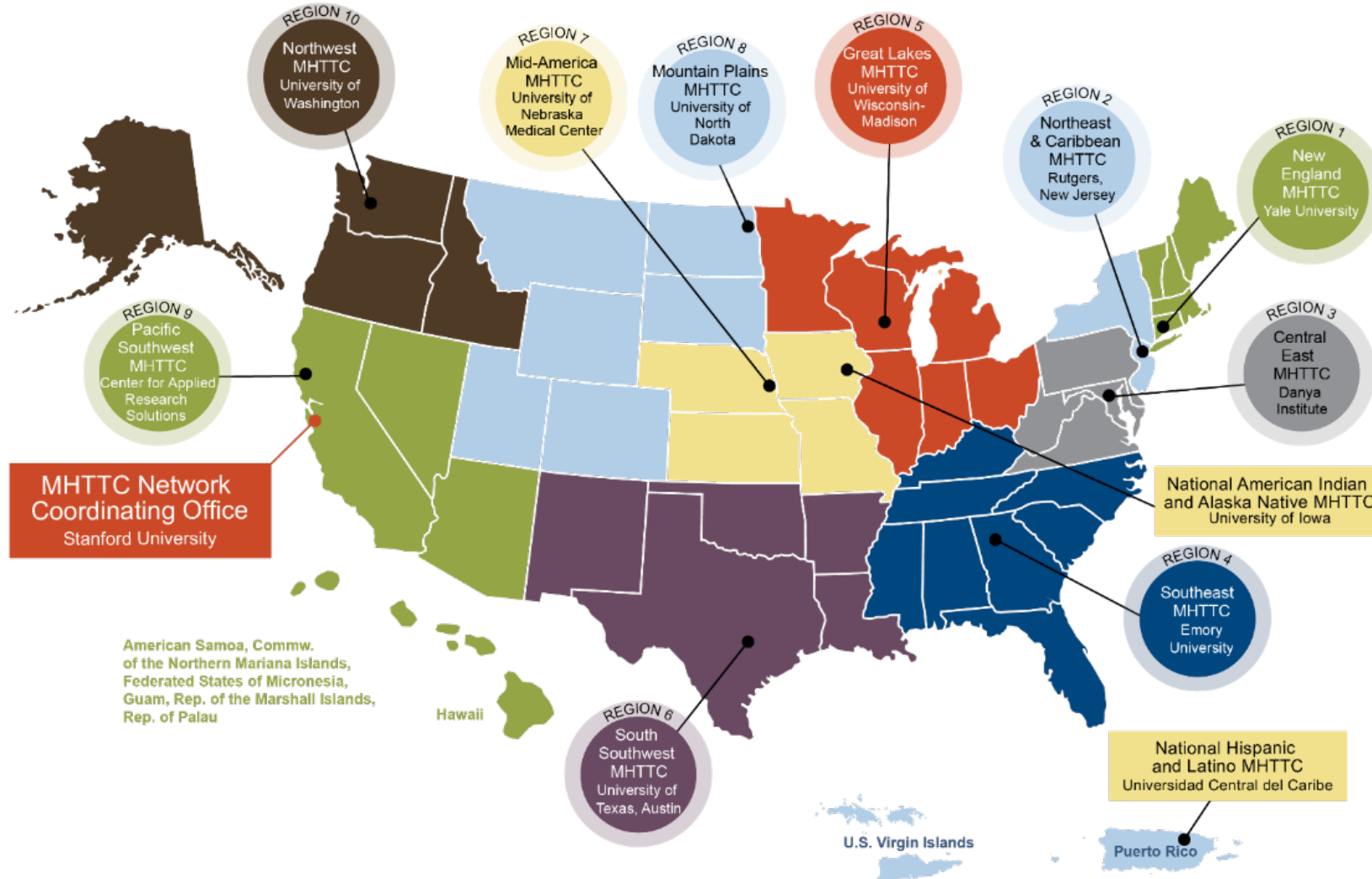


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MHTTC Purpose

The MHTTC Network vision is to unify science, education and service to transform lives through evidence-based and promising treatment and recovery practices in a recovery-oriented system of care.

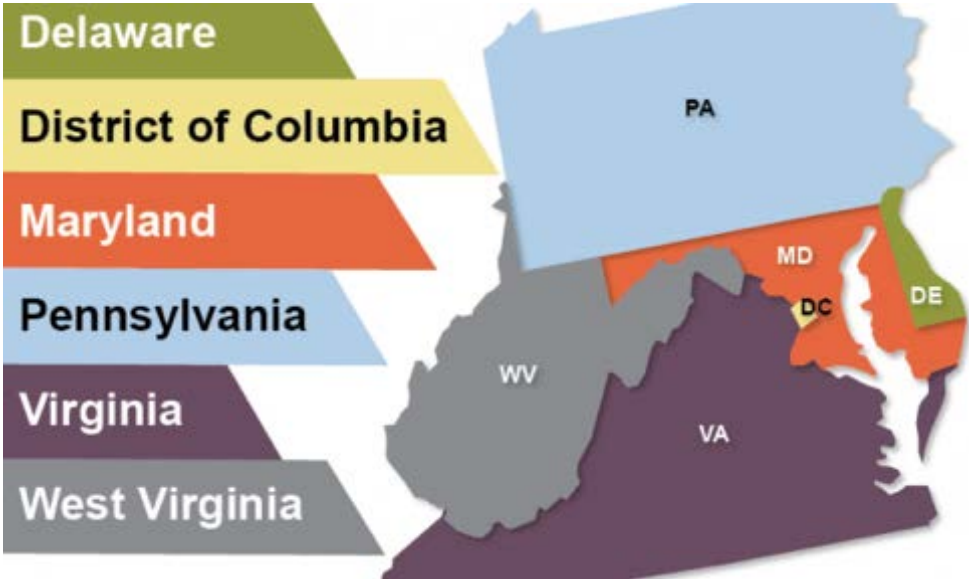


Central East MHTTC Goals

Funded by SAMHSA to:

- **Accelerate** the adoption and implementation of mental health related evidence-based practices
- **Heighten** the awareness, knowledge, and skills of the behavioral health workforce
- **Foster** alliances among culturally diverse practitioners, researchers, policy makers, family members, and consumers
- **Ensure** the availability and delivery of publicly available, free of charge, training and technical assistance

Central East Region 3



Central East (HHS Region 3)

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At the time of this presentation, Miriam Delphin-Rittmon served as Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use and Administrator of SAMHSA. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by SAMHSA/HHS, or the U.S. Government.

Black Mental Wellness, Corp.

- **Dr. Nicole L. Cammack:**
President & CEO
- **Dr. Danielle R. Busby:**
Professional Relations & Liaison
- **Dr. Dana L. Cunningham:**
Community Outreach & Engagement
- **Dr. Jessica S. Henry:**
Program Development & Evaluation



Black Mental Wellness, Corp.

The Mission of Black Mental Wellness

- To provide information and resources about mental health and behavioral health topics from a Black perspective
- To highlight and increase the diversity of mental health professionals
- To decrease the mental health stigma in the Black community

[Black Mental Wellness website](#)



Overview

- Goals:**
- Define grief and types of losses that may cause grief
 - Identify the impact of grief on mental health
 - Coping and wellness strategies to cope with grief (Individual and Workplace)
 - Mental health and wellness support and resources
-

STOP when you notice heightened emotions

- Slow Down
- Take some deep breaths
- Observe what you are feeling in your body
- Process and proceed



What is Grief?

KEY DEFINITIONS: BEREAVEMENT VS GRIEF

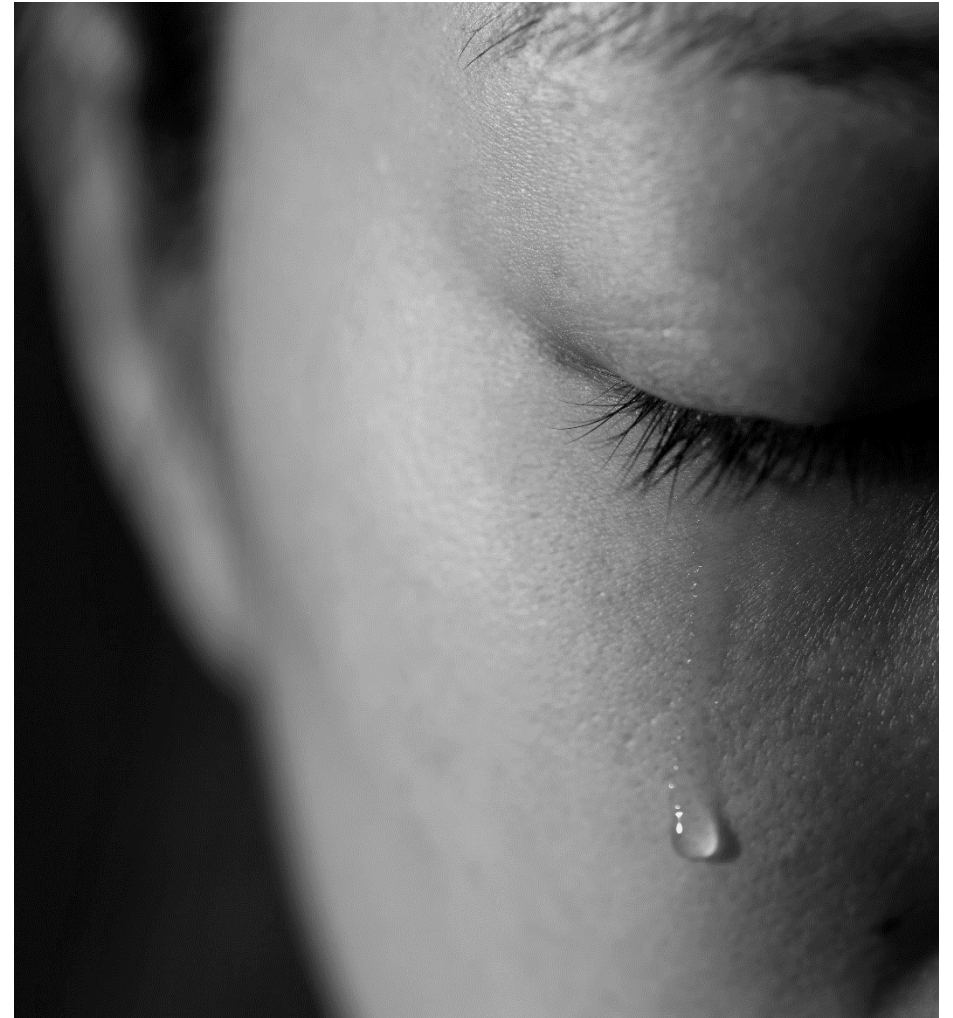
- **Bereavement** = the experience of deprivation or loss by death
- **Grief** = psychological or behavioral response arising from bereavement
- **Traumatic Grief** = Traumatic Grief is a condition in which someone develops significant trauma symptoms related to the death of an attachment figure (e.g., parent or sibling) or another important person (e.g., grandparent, other relative, friend or peer).
 - These trauma symptoms interfere with the child's ability to accomplish the tasks of bereavement.

Grief

Grief is a natural response to loss. It is the overwhelming emotions you feel when something or someone you love is taken away.

Grief (cont.d)

- Grief is **universal**: Everyone experiences grief
- Grief is an **individual experience**: How an individual grieves depends on several factors including personality, coping style, life experiences, faith, impact of loss, closeness to person that passed, etc.
- Although the pain associated with grief is typically tempered over time, **there is no timeline for grieving**

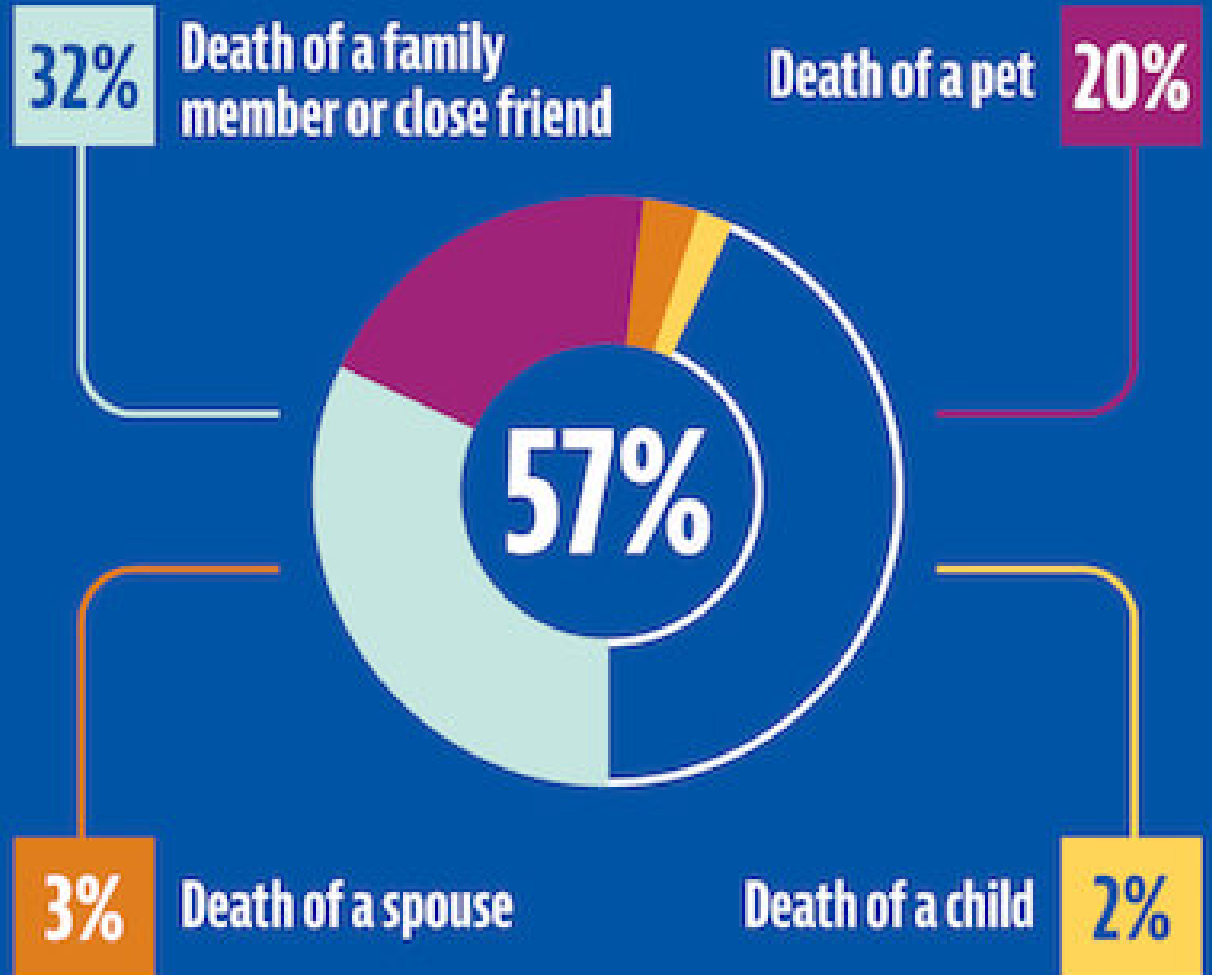


Traumatic Grief

- *Someone with trauma symptoms related to the death of an attachment figure (e.g., parent or sibling) or another important person (e.g., grandparent, other relative, friend or peer).*
- *These trauma symptoms interfere with the person's ability to accomplish the tasks of bereavement.*

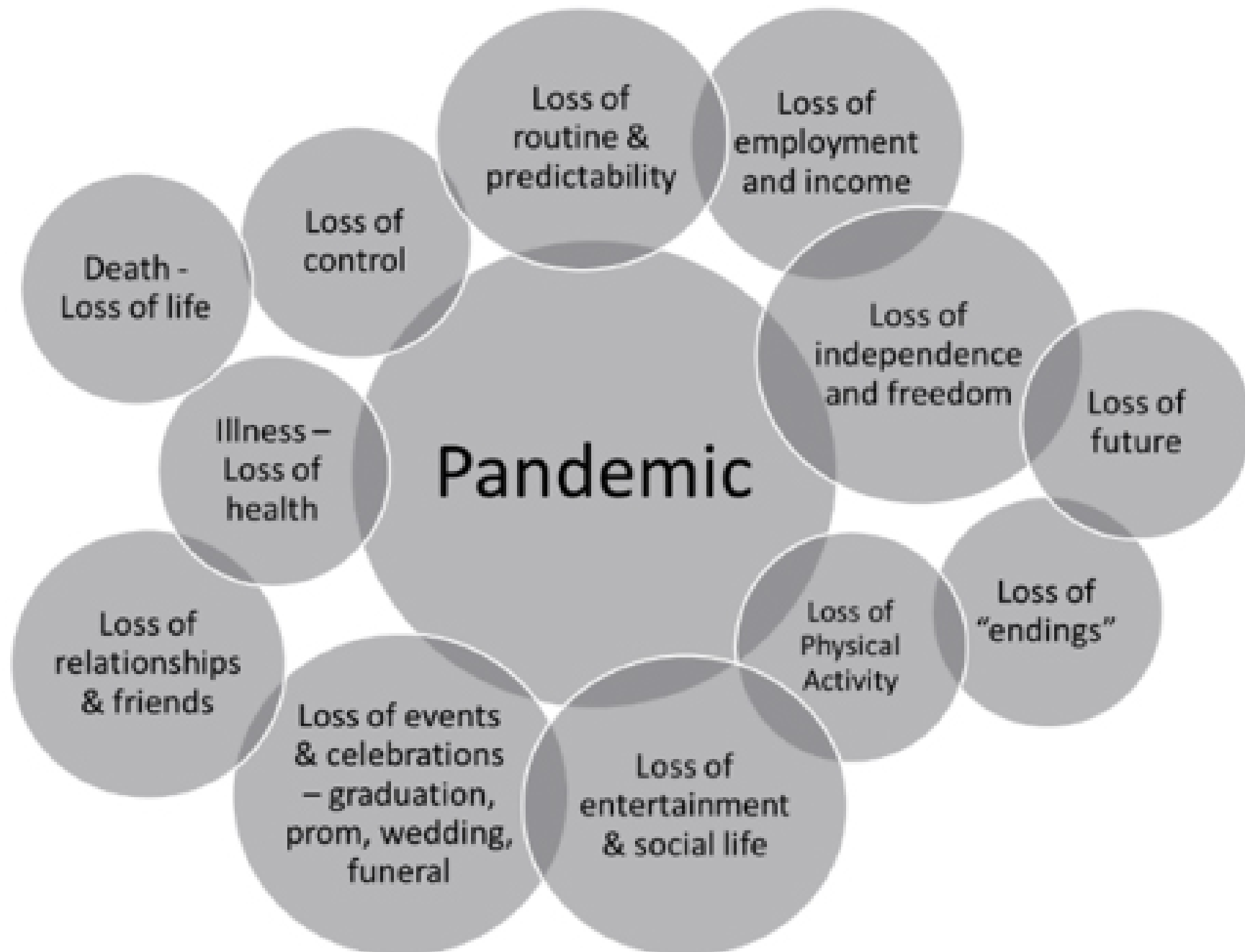
Americans Are Grieving

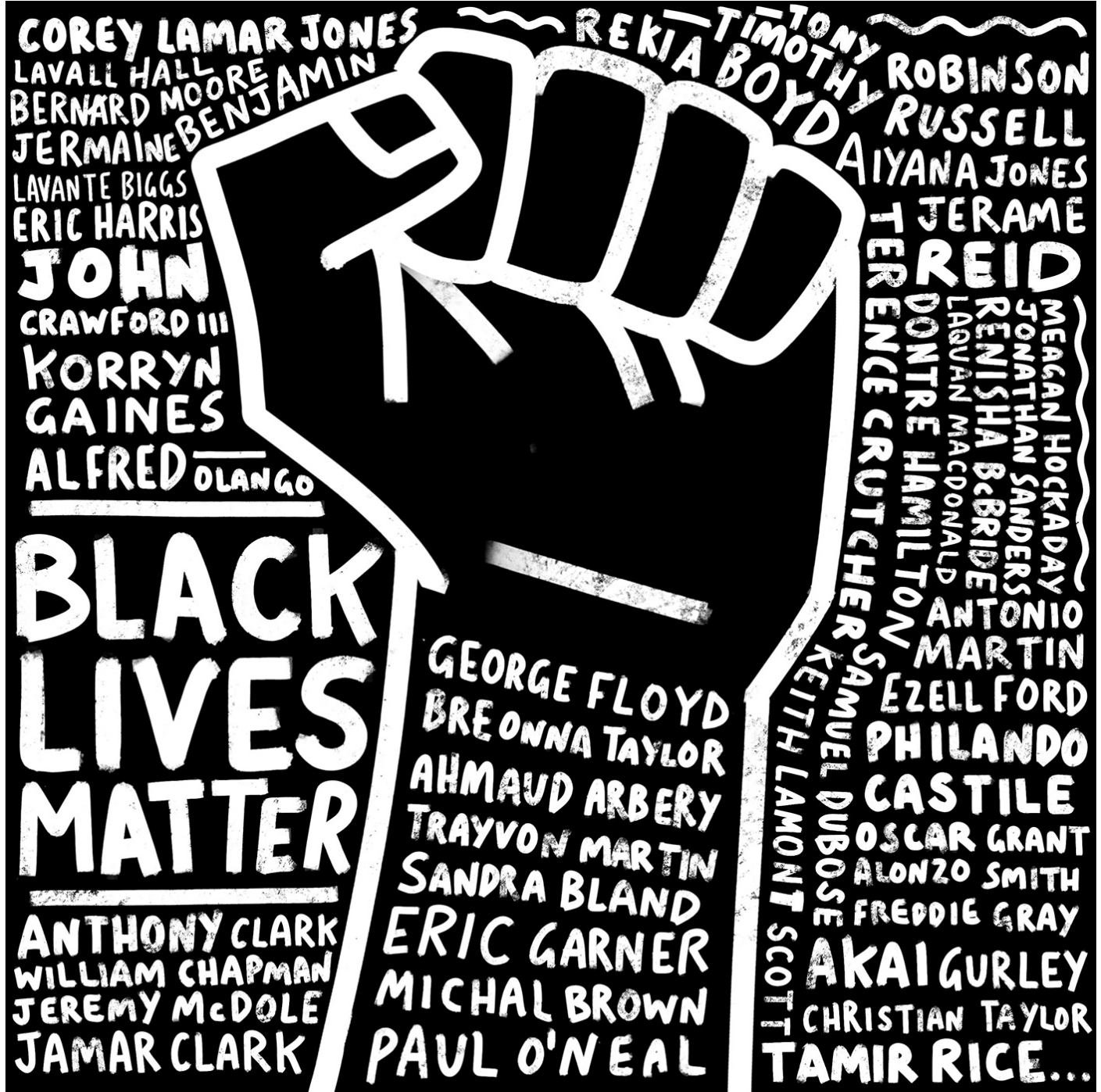
57% Experienced a close loss in the last 3 years



Grief is Not Just About Death: Losses That Can Also Cause Grief

- Death of a loved one
- Death of a pet
- Death of a co-worker
- Death of a celebrity
- Divorce/marital separation
- Imprisonment
- Personal injury or illness
- Loss of financial stability
- Caregiving for a loved one
- Loss of a dream
- Loss of feelings of safety after a trauma
- Loss of a job
- Change of health status for an individual
- Change in health status of a family member
- Retirement
- Natural disasters





COREY LAMAR JONES
LAVALL HALL
BERNARD MOORE
JERMAINE BENJAMIN
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EZELL FORD
PHILANDO CASTILE
OSCAR GRANT
ALONZO SMITH
FREDDIE GRAY
SAMUEL DUBOSE
AKAI GURLEY
CHRISTIAN TAYLOR
TAMIR RICE...

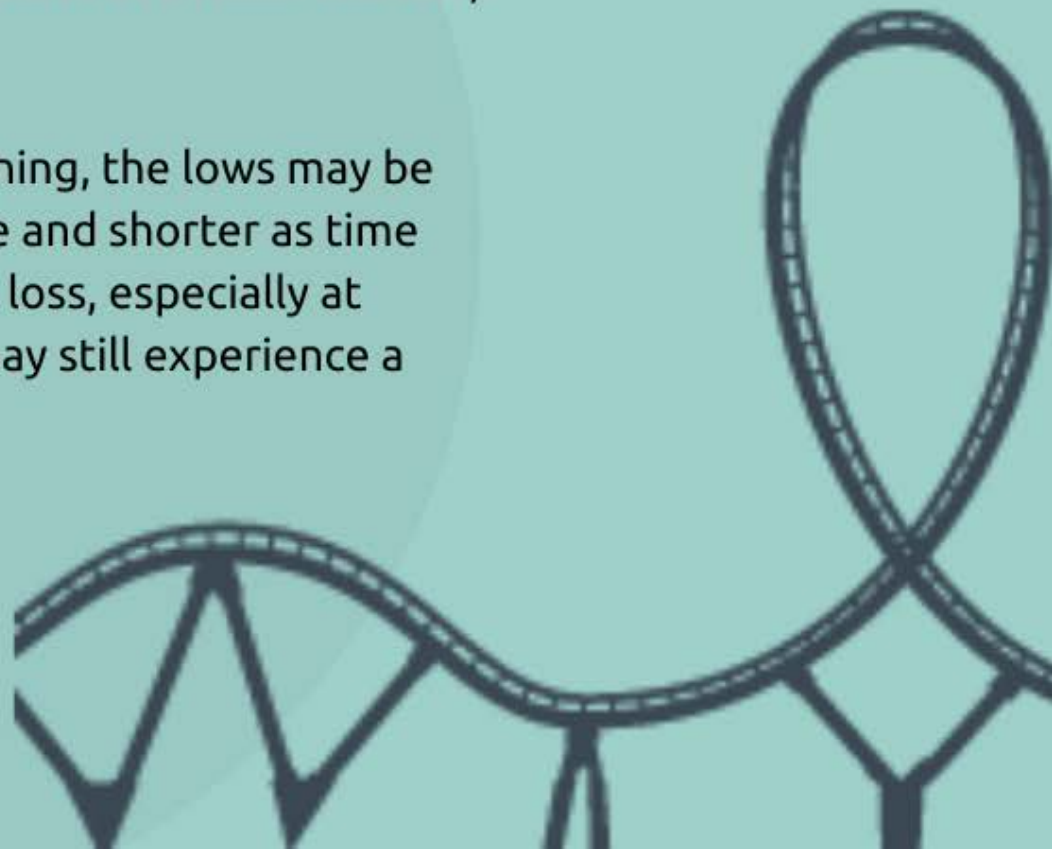


GRIEF CAN BE A ROLLER COASTER



Instead of a series of stages, we might also think of the grieving process as a roller coaster, full of ups and downs, highs and lows.

Like many roller coasters, the ride tends to be rougher in the beginning, the lows may be deeper and longer. The difficult periods should become less intense and shorter as time goes by, but it takes time to work through a loss. Even years after a loss, especially at special events such as a family wedding or the birth of a child, we may still experience a strong sense of grief.



Stages of Grief

Denial	Anger	Bargaining	Depression	Acceptance
“She can’t be dead, I just talked to her”	“I’m angry because this death is unfair”	“If I just do this one thing, she will come back to us”	“I am too sad to do anything”	“Although he died, I’ll be ok”
Normal response to rationalize the loss	Anger towards deceased, others, yourself, or life	Attempt to postpone sadness by imagining “what if” scenarios	Reality of the true extent of the loss	Life isn’t the same, but you are able to navigate your new reality
Avoidance, disbelief, confusion, shock, fear	Decreased motivation or focus, frustration, anxiety	Struggling to find meaning, reaching out to others	Intense sadness overshadows aspects of life, overwhelmed	The pain is still felt, exploring new options, moving forward

Symptoms of Grief

Physical Signs

Emotional Signs

Behavioral Signs

Headache

Anxiety

Overeating or undereating

Muscle tension or pain

Restlessness

Decrease Patience with others

Chest pain

Decreased motivation or focus

Drug or alcohol misuse

Fatigue

Feeling overwhelmed

Tobacco use

Sleep problems

Irritability or anger

Social withdrawal

Digestive Issues

Sadness or depression

Decreased interest in activities

Tasks of Grieving

Task 1: Accepting the loss

Task 2: Working through the pain

Task 3: Living in environment where “my person” is no longer here

Task 4: Connecting to “my person”



Common Grief Responses in the Workplace

- Inability to concentrate
- Lack of interest or motivation
- Lower tolerance
- Chronic fatigue
- Depression
- Decreased productivity
- Decreased morale
- Anger
- Increased stress levels
- Shifting workloads (a temporary response to loss)

**When Does Grief
Symptoms Become
Concerning?**

Warning Signs

- **Mood Changes**

- Feelings of sadness or withdrawal lasting two or more weeks
- Severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships at home or work

- **Intense Feelings**

- Feelings of overwhelming fear for no reasons
- Worries or fears are intense enough to interfere with daily activities
- Physical symptoms: Racing heart or fast breathing

- **Substance Abuse**

- Individuals may use drugs or alcohol to cope with feelings and loss

Warning Signs (cont.d)

- **Behavior Changes**

- Drastic changes in behavior or personality, dangerous or out-of-control behavior
- Fighting frequently, using weapons or expressing a desire to hurt others

- **Difficulty Concentrating**

- Trouble focusing or sitting still, both of which might lead to poor performance at work

- **Unexplained Weight Loss**

- Sudden loss of appetite

- **Physical Harm**

- Grief can lead to suicidal thoughts and attempts at suicide

Levels of Care

Level 1: Minimal Symptoms

- Small changes in your mood, emotions, or behaviors

Level 2: Moderate Symptoms that Require Mental Health Treatment

- Decline in functioning (job performance, difficulty completing tasks)
- Emotional changes (crying)
- Behavioral changes (withdrawn, lack of engagement in activities)
- Health changes (changes in sleep, eating, drinking alcohol)

Level 3: Severe Symptoms that Require Immediate Mental Health Treatment

- Symptoms at this level may require an immediate evaluation by a licensed mental health professional

Action Plan

How are we taking care of ourselves?

More Time with Friends & Family

The #1 grief coping strategy



3 Most Effective Coping Strategies

- 49% Spent more time w/ friends and family
- 35% Listened to / played music
- 26% Sought out faith / spiritual practices

Other Common Experiences

- Read books
- Increased exercise
- Spent time on creative expression, writing, art, etc.
- Traveled
- Attended mental health professional counseling or professional help sessions
- Attended in-person or online support groups / grief support forums / discussions

What Does and Doesn't Sit Well

According to those grieving

Most Helpful



Tried to cheer me up



Shared their experience



Told me it could be worse



Told me to move on



Platitudes



Posted about my loss on
social media



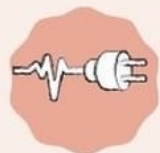
Posted about my loss on
social media



Platitudes

SELF CARE WHEN THE NEWS IS DIFFICULT

therapyforblackgirls.com



UNPLUG & FILTER

If you need to completely take a break from the news and all social media right now, it's ok. If you don't want to take a break, put some limits in place to help you filter. Don't watch videos, read from sources you trust, and only check in 1-2 times per day.



FEEL THE FEELS

When something tragic happens, it's normal to have a variety of feelings: sadness, anger, despair, confusion, etc. All of these are ok and valid. Don't exhaust your energy trying to make sense of how you feel, just allow yourself to feel it.



GET SUPPORT

Make plans to spend time with loved ones who are supportive. Make an appointment with your therapist, or find a supportive online community. It's understandable that the news may be triggering for a lot of people and spending time with those who care can help.



REMEMBER THAT GRIEF IS COMPLICATED

It may feel weird to experience grief about someone or something that doesn't personally impact you, but it's actually normal. It's very likely that another loss in your life is being reactivated right now. Be gentle with yourself.



coping with grief

crazyheadcomics

accept your feelings, and express them

reach out for support, consider counselling

try to keep your routine up

allow yourself time to mourn

prioritize your eating and sleep

treasure and celebrate the lives of your loved ones

talk about the loss with someone you trust

avoid substance use to numb yourself

write and reflect in a journal

don't make big decisions in the midst of grief

be patient with yourself. mourning takes time

remember that life is for the living



Action Plan

Addressing Grief in the Workplace

“While the work must go on, honoring the emptiness is important. Pushing people right back into productivity mode without properly processing the loss as a unit may not only be detrimental to workplace culture, it may ultimately decrease productivity.

-Good Therapy

Bereavement Leave Policies

- Currently, there are no federal laws that require employers to provide employees either paid or unpaid leave
- Only one state, Oregon, has passed a law requiring employers to provide bereavement leave (it took effect January 1, 2014)
- The other 49 states, plus the District of Columbia, do not require employers to provide employees either paid or unpaid bereavement leave

Bereavement Leave Policies – Do's

Bereavement leave is an opportunity for organizations to support people through all types of loss

Give more time off

- 88% of businesses offer paid bereavement leave. These periods typically extend from 3 – 5 days
- E.g., Facebook doubled its bereavement leave to 20 days of paid leave following the loss of an immediate family member and up to 10 days for an extended family member

Expand definition of family

- Many bereavement leave policies distinguish between immediate and extended family members
- Increased flexibility covers the loss of any loved one, including a partner, child (including miscarriages), parent, grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, and friends

Bereavement Leave Policies – Do's (cont.d)

Offer grief counseling

- Many organizations already provide some type of mental health support to your employees, and this is the time to remind people that it's available (e.g., EAPs)

Take the individual's lead

- Please do not make decisions for employees who are grieving
- E.g., If they want to take on more work, give it to them. If they don't want to take their full bereavement time off, don't insist that they do. If they want to talk about the loss, listen. If they don't, respect their wishes

Believe your grieving employees

- Do not ask to see a death certificate, obituary or letter from a funeral home or hospital
- Believe employees when they say they are grieving and give them the space and time they need

RSA



Shorts

Supporting a Grieving Colleague

Avoid asking “what happened?”

- Instead, try saying, “I’m thinking of you,” “I’m holding you in my thoughts,” or “I’ll check in from time to time.”

Offer specific tasks you could do for them, and let them decide what, if anything, they would like you to do

- “I want you to know you can call on me to help at any time. I can bring over meals, organize volunteers to help, run errands, make phone calls that are hard for you to make right now, walk with you, talk with you, or make a mean cup of coffee.”

Supporting a Grieving Colleague (cont.d)

Avoid comparison

- We are all different in how we mourn. The grieving process for each person is different depending on whom we mourn.

Take your time & let grieving colleagues take their time

- Send an email letting them know you're thinking of them or welcoming them back
- When in doubt, offer your condolences in private, during a lunch break, or when your colleague doesn't have to set aside their raw emotions and get into business mode

Do not ignore grieving colleagues

- Do not let your level of discomfort lead you to say nothing

Supporting a Grieving Colleague (cont.d)

Do not track colleagues and their progress

- Instead of saying, “Are you doing any better?” or “I’m glad you came to the party. It must mean you’re doing better,” simply try, “It’s good to see you” or “I’m glad you came.”

Do not think of this as one and done

- Let your colleague know that you’re around
- Try a simple text, such as “Thinking of you” or “Here to support you whenever you need it.”

Mental Health & Wellness Resources

[Boris L. Henson Foundation](#)

[Melanin & Mental Health](#)

[Healing Black Women](#)

[Black Mental Health Alliance](#)

[NAMI](#)

[The Trevor Project](#)

[Silence the Shame](#)

[The Steve Fund](#)

[Black Therapists Rock](#)

[Black Emotional and Mental Health Collective](#)

Mental Health & Wellness Support

[Therapy for Black Girls](#)

[Therapy for Black Men](#)

[Psychology Today](#)

[Open Path Psychotherapy Collective \(Affordable Therapy\)](#)

[The Loveland Foundation \(Vouchers for Therapy\)](#)

**Employee Assistance Program
University Counseling Center**

Mental Health & Wellness Videos

Daily Calm 10 Minute Meditations

Daily Desk Stretches

Virtual Relaxation Rooms

Dartmouth Student Wellness Center

Mental Health & Wellness Apps

Apps that can be useful in providing additional mental health support, coping skills, and resources



- **Liberate**



- **Headspace** (e.g., Acknowledging Our Privilege, Breathing in Hope, Breathwork for the Moment, Connecting to Ancestral Wisdom)



- **MindShift**



- **Army** (an alarm app that includes small activities that need to be completed in order to turn the alarm off; perfect for low motivation and seasonal depression)



- **CALM**

MINDFULNESS MEDITATION



Smiling Mind



Insight Timer



iSleep Easy

PRACTICING WELLNESS



Sanvello



Happify



SuperBetter

MANAGING THE MOMENT



Calm



Serenita



Woebot

FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL



PTSD Coach



Virtual Hope Box



Tactical Breather

For More Information

[Black Mental Wellness Website](#)

Email

[Dr. Nicole Cammack](#)

[Dr. Danielle Busby](#)

Social Media



Black Mental Wellness



Black Mental Wellness

Questions



Black Mental Wellness Series

Save the Dates

Coping with Grief and Loss

April 28, 2022. 1:00pm - 2:00pm ET

How to Talk to Youth about Race and Racial Trauma

May 25, 2022. 1:00pm - 2:00pm ET

Caring for the Caregiver

June 8, 2022. 1:00pm - 2:00pm ET

Exploring Racial Stress and Intergenerational Trauma

June 23, 2022. 1:00pm - 2:00pm ET

Contact Us



a program managed by



[Central East MHTTC website](#)

[Oscar Morgan](#), Project Director

[Danya Institute website](#)

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240-645-1145

Let's connect:

