

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH IMPACTS OF COVID-19

Module 3: Grief, Loss, and Bereavement during COVID-19

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Agenda



**Impacts of grief,
loss, and
bereavement**



**The collective
experience of loss**



**Methods for working
with grief, loss, and
bereavement**



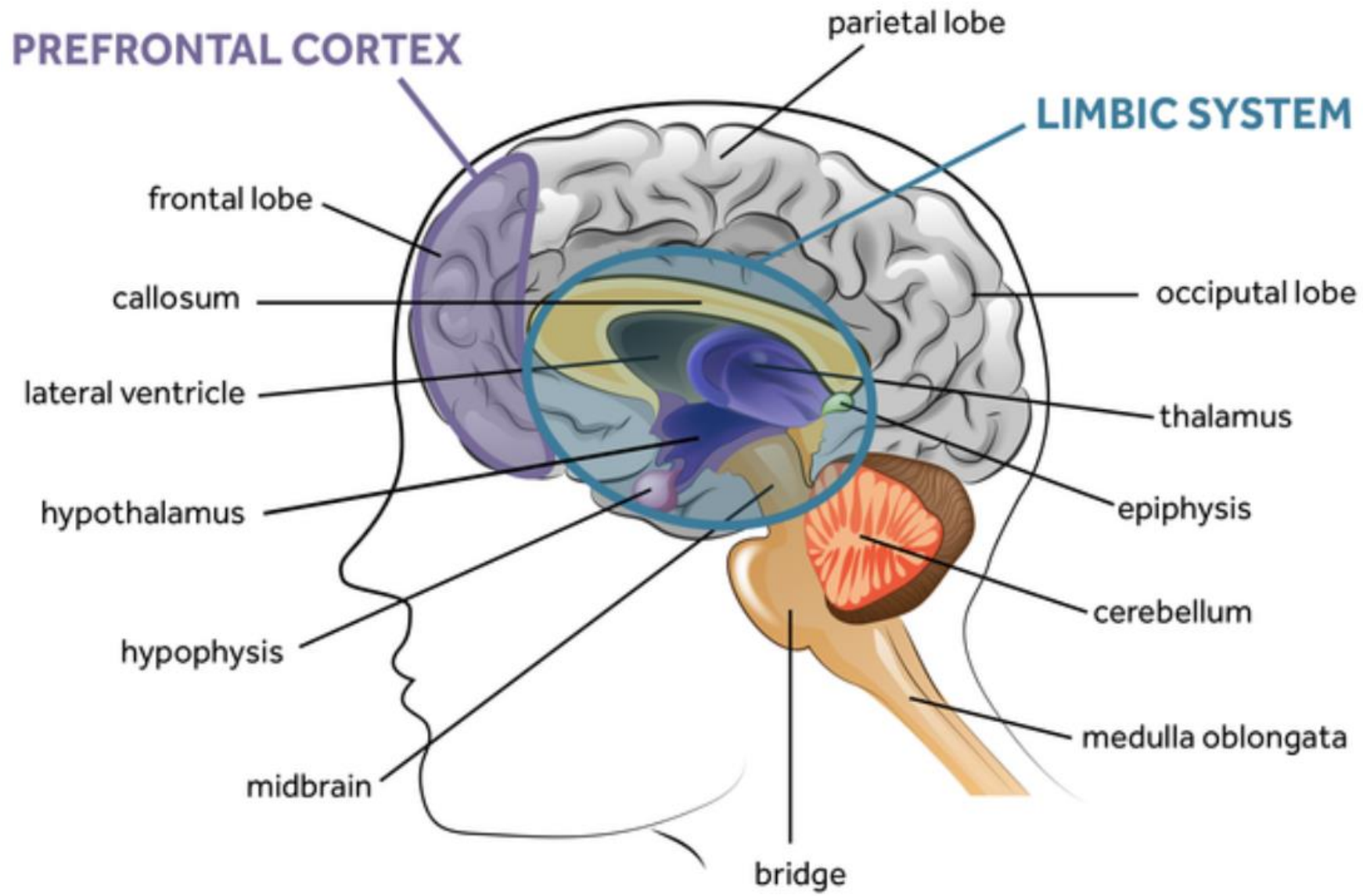
HEAL Model

Impacts of Grief, Loss, and Bereavement

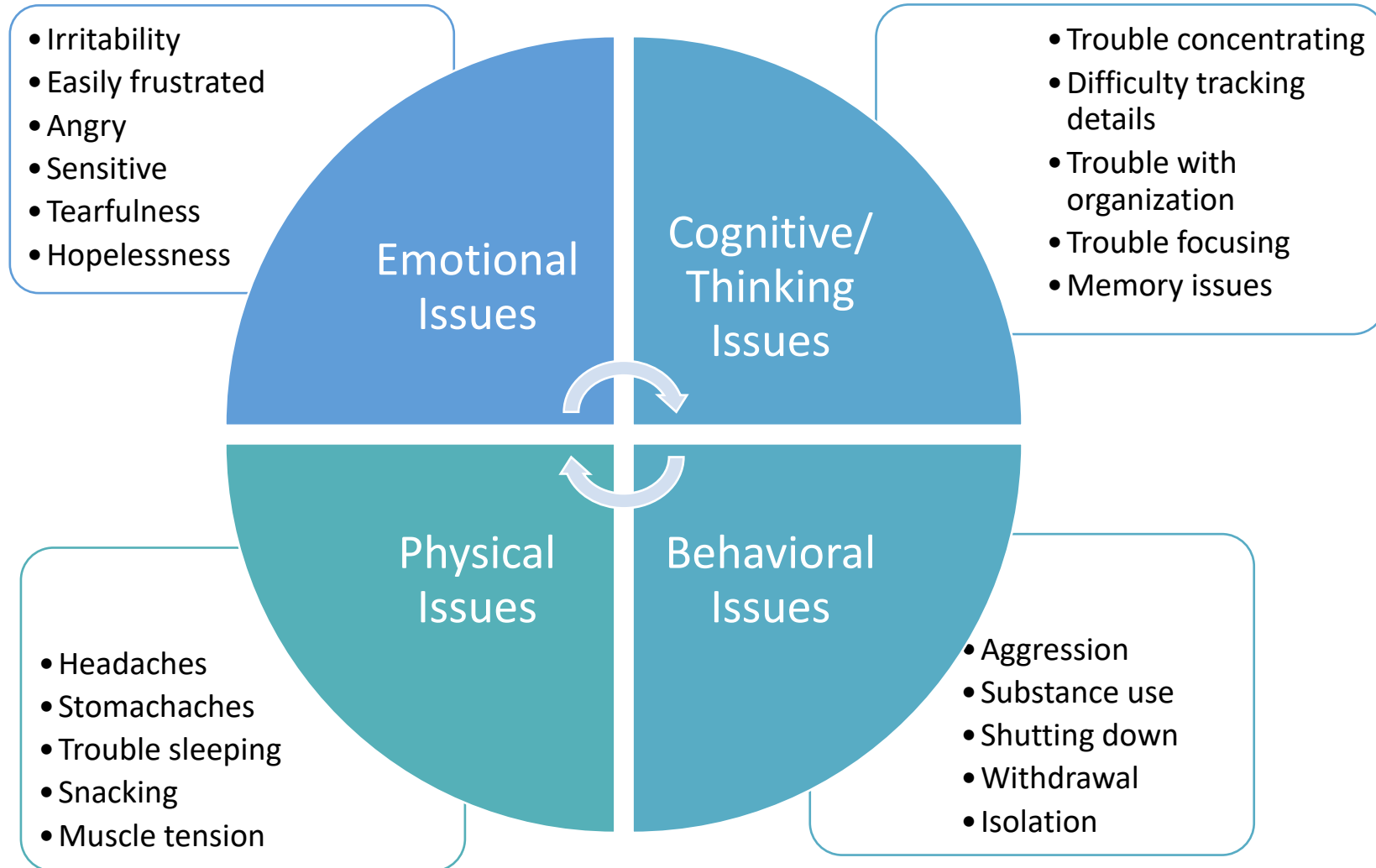
- The COVID-19 pandemic is a disaster that has markedly increased the impact of grief and bereavement for many.
- Elevated acute grief reactions related to COVID-19 predict an increase of *prolonged grief disorders* (PGDs). PGD is defined as a pathological response to grief, which often occurs along with depression, anxiety, and *post-traumatic stress disorder*.
- The loss of a close relative to COVID-19 is expected to affect the grieving relative and as many as nine other people as well. Extensive social distancing which is occurring during the pandemic may also lead to grief.

The Collective Experience of Loss

- Any loss right now is likely to touch on a deep well of loss that we all have experienced to some degree over the last year.
- Emotional reactions and responses may be proportionally stronger to **any** loss as a result.
- Emotion regulation is already a challenge when the brain is exhausted.

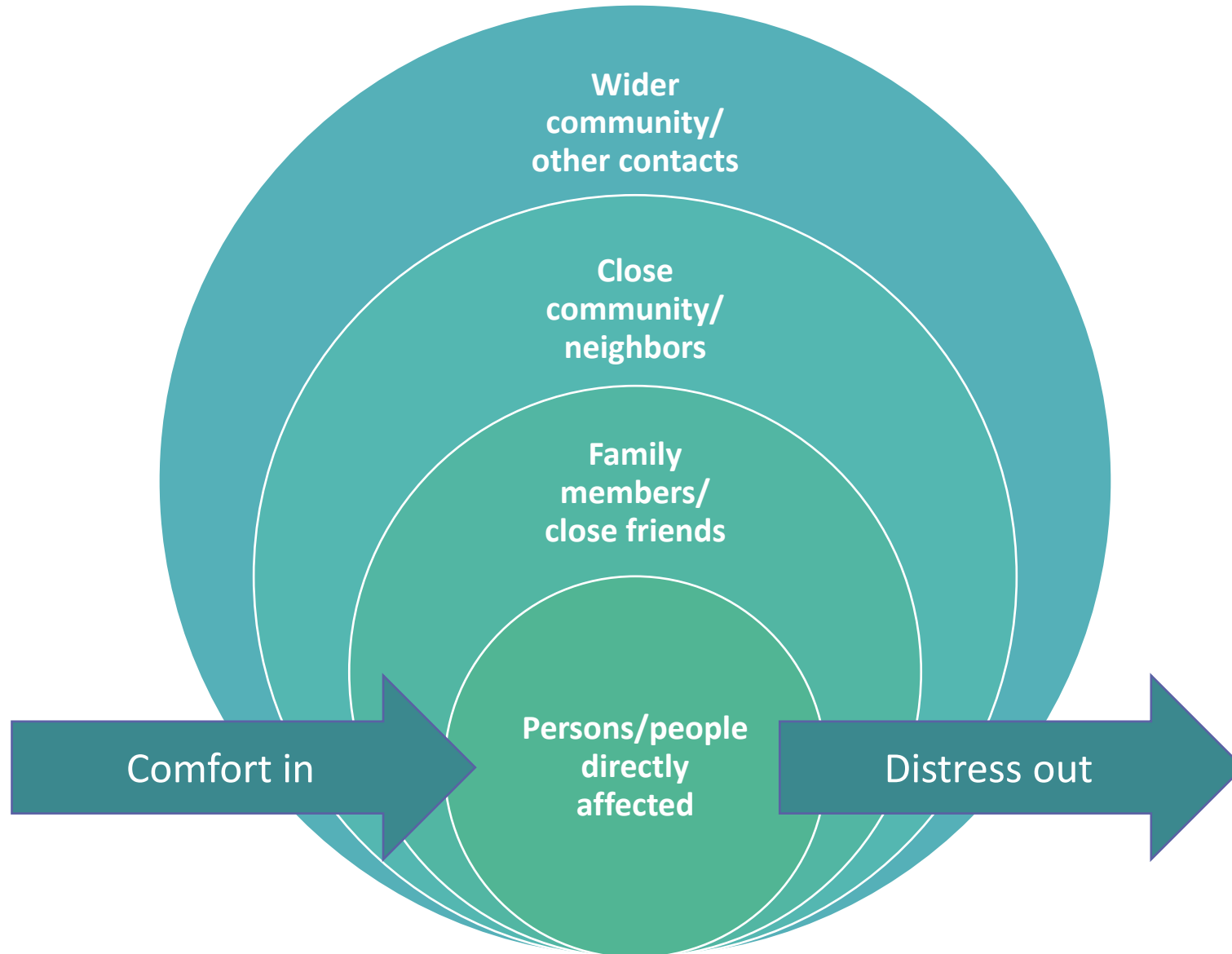


Common Responses

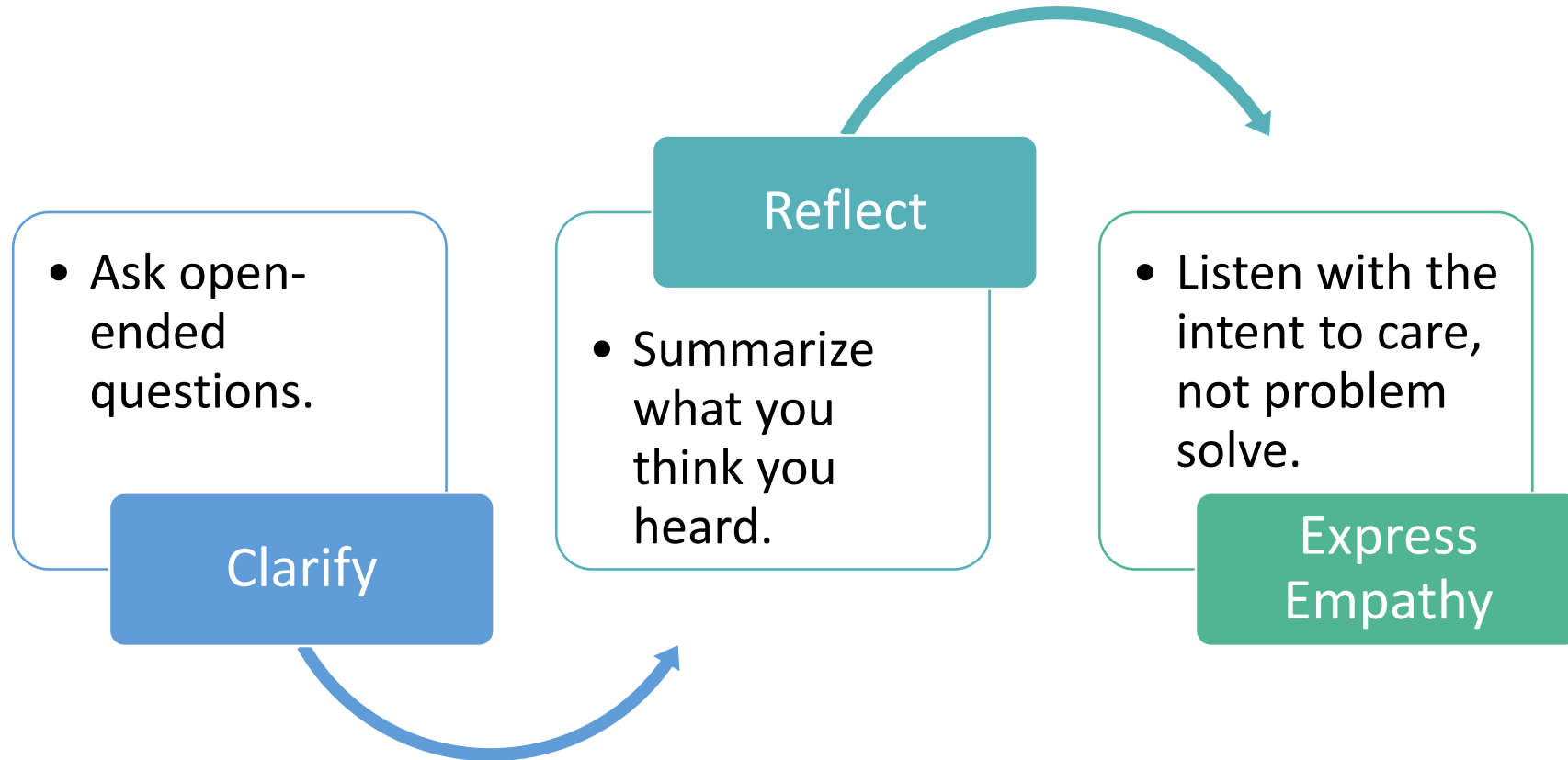


Methods for Working With Grief, Loss, and Bereavement

- There is no right or wrong way, or specific timeframe for people to process grief and loss. Increasing resilience and moving forward with recovery will also differ for each person.
- In a professional context, stay focused on validating and listening to the griever.
- Authentic reactions with the intention to support someone in pain, not to make them feel better.
- *Active listening* is the recommended and preferred “intervention” to support anyone struggling with grief and loss.



Active Listening



Breakout Session

What are some suggestions you can make for clients and patients to help support them or for them to effectively support others?

- Consider words/phrases and questions that can be helpful.
- Consider concrete offers of help and suggestions for support around day-to-day activities.

Content Considerations for Working With Grief, Loss, and Bereavement

- Facilitate problem solving and decision making to **prevent impulsive or risky decisions** (e.g., precautionary health measures, burial decisions).
- **Modify coping plans** if traditional strategies aren't possible (e.g., gathering with family to grieve through online video chat).
- Identify connections (relationships) of support for the person who is grieving.
- Help them focus on engaging in the simpler, more concrete tasks and activities that are uplifting, so that the effects of self-efficacy can grow.
- Provide psychoeducation about the grief process if helpful, especially regarding the warning symptoms of complicated grief and trauma.

HEAL Model: Starting Points

It is important to note that the grief and loss process is not specific to the loss of a person or the death of a loved one.

Many people go through the grief and loss process when there is something else (besides a person) that has been lost. Examples include:

- Loss of identity (such as might take place after a personal assault or rape)
- Loss of meaning (such as might take place after a life transition or move)
- Loss of an idea or principle (a shift in world view that is brought about after a disaster or major event)

HEAL Model: Starting Points



HEAL Model: Honor

Honor the loss by participating in rituals, ceremonies, or other events when possible (even online).

Rather than avoiding memories, an important part of healing is to honor the memory of the person, idea, situation, or experience that was so significant.

Write in a journal, share stories, look at pictures, and reflect on memories.

HEAL Model: **E**xpress

Express emotion – there are no wrong emotions.

Being angry is a common emotion that many people experience in grief.

In the case of the loss of a loved one, it is not uncommon for people to feel angry toward that person, then feel guilty for being angry. This is normal, and it is okay to express these feelings.

Deep sadness as well as emotional flattening (not expressing much of anything) are also common in the grief process.

HEAL Model: **A**cknowledge

- **Acknowledge the obstacles** that may be blocking the healing.
- Most people tell themselves things that prevent them from really accepting the loss. Acknowledging those obstacles tends to remove them and helps with healing.
- **Common obstacles** that get in the way of acknowledgement (and then accepting) the loss include:
 - Avoiding or denying the loss
 - Wishing things were different than they are (if only)
 - Wondering what could have caused a different outcome (but if)

HEAL Model: Live

- Living is more than simply existing.
- Some days following a loss, all someone can do is continue to breathe and make it through the day.
- Over time, as the healing process continues, it becomes important to focus on life and **active** living, rather than just surviving or existing.
- Focus on living by engaging, learning, participating, doing, and feeling.
- The active development of the elements of resilience can help with this.

Resources

Training:

- Health Support Team (including train-the-trainer)
- PsySTART-Responder (frontline healthcare only)

Resources:

- MEDIC, REST, and SAFE models
- [Behavioral Health Group Impact Reference Guide](#)
 - Healthcare and behavioral health providers, outreach teams, post critical care individuals, etc.
 - Unique challenges and considerations
 - Support strategies (organizational, supervisory, and personal)
- Children and families: [Behavioral Health Toolbox for Families: Supporting Children and Teens During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- Emergency and healthcare workers: [Coping During COVID-19 for Emergency and Healthcare Professionals](#)
- Businesses and workers: [COVID-19 Guidance for Building Resilience in the Workplace](#)

Resources (continued)

Webpages:

- DOH – Forecasts, situation reports, guidance, and other resources:
 - [Behavioral Health Resources Webpage](#)
- State – General mental health resources and infographics:
 - [Mental and Emotional Well-being Resources](#)
 - [Infographic Library](#)

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