



# GRIEVING IN THE COVID ERA AND BEYOND

MHTTC: Grief Sensitivity Track

THE PANDEMIC HAS HIGHLIGHTED THE WAYS IN WHICH MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES EXPERIENCE DEATH AND LOSS AT MUCH HIGHER RATES THAN WHITE COMMUNITIES, AND YET GRIEF THEORY REMAINS LARGELY DOMINATED BY WHITE AND PROTESTANT THOUGHT.

IN PART 1, WE WILL DISCUSS THE WAYS IN WHICH CONTEMPORARY GRIEF THEORY OFTEN SIDELINES MARGINAL COMMUNITIES, AND HIGHLIGHT COVID-19-SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING GRIEF AND LOSS.

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[WWW.COVIDPAPER.ORG](http://WWW.COVIDPAPER.ORG)

The valuable resources from the COVID Paper are available below.



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**Grieving in a Pandemic:  
Connection in a Difficult  
Time**

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**COVID-19 Burial,  
Cremation, and the  
Pandemic Funeral**

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**Tools for Keeping in Touch  
in an Era of Pandemic  
Dying**

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**End of Life Resources:  
Dying, Hospice, and  
Funeral Planning**

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**Memorializing a Loved One  
& Celebrations of Life**

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**General Grief Resources**

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**Grief Resources for  
Children, Caregivers &  
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**Alternate & Creative  
Disposal Options**

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# PRE- PANDEMIC DEATH AND GRIEF

- Lots of Grief Theories, but Kubler-Ross model still dominant cultural model
- Grief Theory largely focused on Healthy grieving, with complex grief and/or prolonged grief as problematic
- Lack of awareness regarding the many and varied cultural and religious variants of grief, in grief theory
- Little awareness of Collective Grief
- Employers generally unaware or uninterested in developing comprehensive grief policies
- Grief seen through mostly a monolithic lens, dominated by the white and protestant experience
- Often centered on non-traumatic grief experiences, presenting the non-white grief experience/ ritual as a “minority view,” though non-white populations are expected to outnumber whites in the United States by the year 2045

# PANDEMIC DEATH AND GRIEF

- Recognition of Racial Disparity as communities of color are hit harder by the Pandemic

Rate ratios compared to White, Non-Hispanic Persons	American Indian or Alaska Native, Non-Hispanic persons	Asian, Non-Hispanic persons	Black or African American, Non-Hispanic persons	Hispanic or Latino persons
Cases <sup>1</sup>	2.8x higher	1.1x higher	2.6x higher	2.8x higher
Hospitalization <sup>2</sup>	5.3x higher	1.3x higher	4.7x higher	4.6x higher
Death <sup>3</sup>	1.4x higher	No Increase	2.1x higher	1.1x higher

# PANDEMIC DEATH AND GRIEF

- Shift in awareness of grief from personal experience to Collective Grief
- Shift in increasing recognition of the need for better work-related Bereavement Policies (e.g. the United States still has no federal policy in place) and increase in desire to develop work policies
- “Death Talk” and discussions of grief increase and become more acceptable
- Stigma associated with COVID deaths because of politicization of COVID
- Grief in the midst of Trauma so much more difficult to garner support
- Body policing in conjunction with grief policing (experienced in various ways for years by communities of color, and women but a first for others)
- Embracing of Technology that might have previously taken years to become wide-spread

# TRAUMA-INFORMED GRIEF: CARE & PRACTICES

Grief in a Pandemic is Traumatic because:

- there are multiple losses
- the pandemic spotlights inequities (particularly those of race and gender)
- we are experiencing policing of our bodies in new and invasive ways (temperature checks, mandatory COVID tests, rules regarding masking, etc.) and most likely this will only increase
- our jobs are tied to healthcare so holding onto our jobs is more important than ever, even when we feel as though we are in danger
- Many people are experiencing grief simultaneously, making it more difficult to care for others or ask for care
- Moral Distress: How does it impact grief?

*Trauma-Informed Grief Care & Practices will be more appropriate and effective because we grieve within or context, and this is not grief in regular circumstances, but grief in a traumatic situation.*

# HOW TO BETTER PROVIDE TRAUMA-INFORMED GRIEF CARE AND PRACTICES?

See and Name Trauma— this gives agency back to victims

Re-Cognize how the Pandemic has spot-lighted inequities-- this provides trustworthiness between counselors and their patients

Provide Grief tools that don't reintroduce Trauma (loss compounds loss, so this is a difficult thing to do!)— this provides safety for those experiencing trauma

Find community— this provides collaboration between griever and those around them

Utilize Everyday rituals and tools to manage grief to fight trauma- this gives griever empowerment in their grief





# BREAKOUT DISCUSSION QUESTION

How can facing our mortality act as a healing practice in our lives?

# NEXT TIME!

In Part 2, we will explore solution-based grief tools for marginalized communities, and present options for professionals and their clients to utilize in grief sensitivity and recovery. Particular attention will be given to both low-tech grief rituals such as meals that center on honoring the dead, and high-tech solutions centered on [www.eol.community](http://www.eol.community), Michael Hebb's recently launched website with hundreds of resources for all stages of dying, death and grief. Also, attendees may want to reference the COVID website ([www.covidpaper.org](http://www.covidpaper.org)) for more information specifically outlining grief in the pandemic.