



THE NEW NORMAL

What is the “New Normal”?

Life in lockdown has created a range of challenges for most of us. Some people have responded with shock at what is happening in our communities and the infection rates not slowing down. Other people have responded with anger and annoyance and other people have reached a stage of acceptance and decided to focus their energy on controlling the “controllable” and focusing on the future and hope. The different responses to our current situation, reminds me of the stages we can experience when we grieve a loss. Some people mourn the loss of their freedom of movement, others mourn the loss of their routine, and some mourn the loss of employment, work identity and financial security.

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, a Swiss American Psychiatrist developed a 5 stage model of Grief and Loss, which can be placed in 3 phases:

Initial phase - denial, shock, bargaining

Middle phase - sadness, depression and;

Final phase - acceptance and then hope for the future.

Please know that mourning is an intimate and unique experience and does not have to follow the stages or phases mentioned, in a linear manner. It is hard for parents to attend to their children’s needs if they do not acknowledge what is happening for them. It can be useful to pause and just reflect where you are on this journey.

It is also useful to reflect on what is happening for your children. They may also be mourning the loss of socialising with their friends, extramural sport activities, formals and attending parties.

Useful Responses

Being aware that you are experiencing loss and grief is the first step in this process. It is useful to understand why you are experiencing the intense emotions you may be feeling. It is useful to understand that the intense emotions you may be experiencing is not a sign of a mental health condition, but a natural and appropriate response to a grief and loss situation.

The Acceptance stage is not about being okay with what happened, but it provides an opportunity to learn to live with it. It does not mean you will never feel sadness or anger again about the loss, it just means an acceptance that reality will be different.

Holding onto Positivity

We can be the designers of the “New Normal”. This pandemic is also providing families with more time together and opportunities to cultivate appreciation, tolerance and understanding as well as learning to cope and develop patience. We have an opportunity to ensure that our children feel safe, supported, included and loved. Quality time with children and families can turn even the most mundane tasks, special. Try cooking and eating together, getting creative, doing Zumba together and playing the games that generate laughter. These activities help children feel more connected, safe and happier. It will support your wellbeing too.

You may want to listen to a podcast on work identity and job loss, [click here](#)

Mrs Jacoline Petersen

Director of Student Counselling
