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Our Exclusive Newsletter for Individuals

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How to Celebrate Thanksgiving Safely During COVID-19

Turkey, mashed potatoes, family, and football all bring about the nostalgia of Thanksgiving for many people. However, with the pandemic underway and COVID-19 cases increasing in many areas, it's difficult to imagine this year's celebration like those of the past.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's leading infectious diseases expert, recently told Yahoo News, "I think we need to realize things might be different this year, particularly if you want to have people who are going to be flying in from a place that has a lot of infection — you're going to an airport that might be crowded, you're on a plane, and then to come in — unless you absolutely know you're not infected — there are many people who are not going to want to take that risk."

Fauci added that his family is making adjustments, too. His three daughters who live in different states won't be visiting him this Thanksgiving.

In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states in its guidelines Trusted Source for Thanksgiving that travel Trusted Source increases the chance of getting and spreading the virus that causes COVID-19. However, if you must travel, consider the risks involved Trusted Source first.



Mike's Notes

Thought this was worth sharing to my friends, family and clients.

20 Simple Ways to Practice Gratitude, With Thanksgiving just around the corner, it's a great time to reflect upon all the reasons we have to be thankful...

Even more powerful than being thankful is practicing gratitude, but how? I'll be the first to admit that I've missed more opportunities to show gratitude than I can count. But with practice, I've gotten better at it. Sometimes the simplest compliments or phone calls can mean the world. With that in mind, I found a great list of ways to practice gratitude.

1. Keep a gratitude journal and add to it every day.
2. Tell someone you love them and how much you appreciate them.
3. Notice the beauty in nature each day.
4. Nurture the friendships you have. Good friends don't come along every day.
5. Smile more often.
6. Include an act of kindness in your life each day.
7. Avoid negative media and movies with destructive content.
8. Don't gossip or speak badly about anyone.
9. Spend quality time with your kids or your lover.
10. Remember to compliment your friends and family when they look good.
11. Write a card to someone you haven't seen in a while and tell them something nice.
12. When you think a negative thought, try to see the positive side of the situation.
13. Commit to one day a week when you won't complain about anything.
14. Try to take note when people do a good job and give recognition when it's due at work.
15. Reward effort. If someone does something nice for you, do something nice for them.
16. Thank the people who serve you in the community — the shopkeeper, the bus drivers, etc.
17. Say thank you for the little things your loved ones do for you, things you normally take for granted.
18. Embrace challenges and turn them into opportunities to grow.
19. See the growth opportunity in your mistakes.
20. Help your friends see the positive side of life.

Have a safe and fun Thanksgiving from all of us at ABM.



Don't forget: December 7, 2020 is last day for open enrollment for your medicare plan. Call ABM to let us help you pick the best plan for your situation. It doesn't hurt to call us at 281-448-3040



Halloween Contest!

ABM Insurance & Benefit Services had a dress up day for Halloween last month, and wanted to share the picture with everyone. Our grand prize winner this year was Crystal Calaway (far right). Thanks to everyone who participated.

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“Family gatherings this year may put our loved ones at risk, especially the most vulnerable, such as grandparents. Better to miss one in-person holiday, so all can celebrate together next year,” Dr. Mark Jarrett, chief quality officer for Northwell Health in New York, told Healthline.

In addition to traveling, the CDC also suggests avoiding the following activities to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus:

- attending large indoor gatherings with people from outside of your household
- participating or being a spectator at a crowded race
- attending crowded parades
- shopping in crowded stores around Thanksgiving
- using alcohol or drugs Trusted Source, which can cloud judgment

There’s good news, though. There are ways to celebrate Thanksgiving without putting yourself or others at risk.

Health experts share a few ideas and their level of risk, according to the CDC.

1. Revise your dinner plans (low/moderate risk)

Finding an alternative way to celebrate the holiday in a manner that you feel is safe and responsible is important for your mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. Geber86/Getty Images

Since eating a grand meal together is the essence of Thanksgiving celebrations, finding an avenue to enjoy food together is one way to keep the vibe of the day alive. Safer alternatives include:

Dine virtually (low risk)

A virtual dinner party is the safest and best option to connect with those who can’t travel to see you. Organize a start time to eat over Skype, Zoom, or Facetime. You can initiate the same traditions virtually as you would in person, such as asking everyone what they’re grateful for or to share a favorite memory of the year so far.

“Virtual gatherings are an alternative way of assessing how well a friend or relative is. Nonverbal information is important. We can see if someone has lost a lot of weight or appears nervous or unhappy,” Krystine Batcho, PhD, professor of psychology at Le Moyne College in New York, told Healthline.

Eat with your housemates (low risk)

If your gathering is smaller than usual, you can still go all out with those you live with. Make all your traditional dishes and then some. Sharing them with those you are closest to can be comforting during such an intense time. The CDC suggests preparing traditional family recipes for family members or neighbors who don’t live with you, especially those at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19. You can deliver them in a way that doesn’t involve contact, such as dropping a pie at their door.

“It isn’t just fun to interact with other people, it is essential to well-being to maintain healthy social connections. During the period of social isolation imposed by the pandemic, indicators of anxiety, depression, and feelings of hopelessness have increased,” says Batcho.

By prioritizing relationships, she says holidays strengthen prosocial emotions and behaviors, including compassion, empathy, forgiveness, and altruism. “The pandemic has reminded us that we all need one another, and we’re all in this together,” she adds.

Host a small outdoor dinner (moderate risk)

If sticking to dining with people in your household isn’t going to cut it, the CDC suggests hosting an outdoor meal Trusted Source with a small group of family and friends who live in your community.

If you have family or friends who are traveling a distance to join you, Jarrett says to remind them not to let their guard down.

"Keep gatherings to... no one with symptoms. Extra precautions can include 10 to 14 days of quarantine [from] visitors before the event. Wear masks, distance, wash hands," he said.

2. Visit your favorite fall farm (moderate risk)

To get in the Thanksgiving spirit, research pumpkin patches or orchards where people are expected to wear masks, maintain physical distancing, and use hand sanitizer before touching pumpkins or picking apples. Taking in the experience and enjoying that it's possible during the pandemic may make the adventure all the more worth it. Finding a spot on the farm or orchard to sit and reflect with those you are with can bring meaning to the season.

"This year, when gatherings might not be possible or advisable, we can still enjoy the benefits of holidays like Thanksgiving. We can take time to reflect on the value of gratitude and the meaning of our lives," says Batcho.

3. Get your TV fix (low/moderate risk)

Bingeing a new show or catching up with an old favorite can be an enjoyable form of self-care if you're isolated from others during the holiday. Getting good TV time is a must for many on Thanksgiving. While it might not be possible to watch football, events, parades, or "A Christmas Story" with a bunch of your favorite people snuggled on the couch as the smell of turkey fills the room, you can still do this with those you live with.

Since shopping is such a big part of Thanksgiving and the day after, if you feel like you'll miss out, shop online with those you live with. You can all browse together while eating seconds from Thanksgiving dinner.

"We love the excitement that prevents us from becoming bored, and we appreciate the benefits advances in science have given us in medicine, health, safety, entertainment, and convenience. But change is inherently stressful as we need to adapt, learn new skills and ways of doing things, and give up some of our old ways of living," she said. Because unexpected or substantial change threatens a sense of being in control, anxiety that stems from the uncertainty of the future is heightened when you no longer feel that you can predict what might come next and whether you'll be able to cope with it.



This is where dependable markers in time, such as holidays, alleviate the sense that things might be changing more rapidly than you can or want to keep up with, added Batcho.

"Because holidays are predictable, they offer the opportunity to hit 'pause,' and give a bit of stress relief. Grounded in tradition, holidays connect us to the past and ensure the comforting feeling of continuity across time and change," she said.

As uncertainty continues to flourish during the pandemic, there is a greater need to strengthen and renew relationships.

"Holidays serve as society's agreed upon opportunities to attend to our need to stay socially connected. Get-togethers with family, friends, and co-workers remind us of our importance to others and preserve our sense of meaning and purpose in our lives," Batcho said.

Have a safe and wonderful Thanksgiving from your friends at ABM Insurance & Benefit Services.

ABM Bad Thanksgiving Jokes Of The Month...

What key has legs and can't open doors?

A Turkey.



How to Deal With Grief

By Tracy Asamoah, MD

Have you been experiencing uncomfortable emotions over the past few months? Like a lot of people, you might have been experiencing grief. When the first COVID-19 cases appeared in January, few could imagine that we would be mourning the loss of hundreds of thousands of people several months later. Whether or not you have experienced the death of a loved one, you have probably experienced some form of loss during the pandemic and the difficult emotions that come with it.

Here, we'll go over how to recognize grief, how to manage it, and how to get help if your grief is prolonged or severe. What is grief, and who experiences it?

Grief is a normal and adaptive process in response to a loss. It has been described as the emotional, cognitive, functional, and behavioral response to death — which means grief shows up in our behaviors, thoughts, and feelings when we experience loss. For example, the longing to be with a loved one who has died is an expression of grief.

Your experience with grief might look very different from someone else's. And expressions of grief vary quite a bit not only across individuals, but cultures as well. Around the world, there are differences in emotional expression, behavior, and how long people grieve. Anyone can experience grief. However, people tend to experience more loss as they age. In one study, 70% of adults experienced grief in a 2.5-year period.

What types of losses typically cause grief?

While most people think of grief in response to the loss of a loved one, many losses can cause grief. In fact, many events that you experience throughout your life can lead you to experience grief.

Such experiences include:

- Separation from a loved one
- Death of a family member, friend, or significant other
- Illness or loss of health
- Death of a pet
- A job loss
- Loss of financial security

How long does grief usually last?

Grief is a process occurring over time. Acute grief is the period immediately after a loss and can last from weeks to months. During this period, common emotions and behaviors include:

- Sadness and crying
- Frequent uncomfortable emotions
- Frequent thoughts of the deceased person
- Sleep disruption



Stacy McDaniel

Meet Our Representatives...

Born and raised in Southeast Oklahoma, in/near the beautiful Ouachita Mountains. Stacy began her insurance career 20 years ago in Ft. Smith, Arkansas. In the last 20 years, Stacy has been involved in all aspects of insurance, from life and health, to personal lines insurance and commercial insurance. Stacy and her husband Alan, a customer cabinet builder, moved to Texas 5 days after Hurricane Harvey, so she could pursue a new job in insurance. They have 2 daughters, Aj and Lexy and 3 grandchildren, Kenia, Brayden and Mila.

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- Disruption in normal daily routines

After several months, most people begin to adapt to life after their loss as the acute phase ends. The symptoms of grief are normal responses to loss and will typically diminish gradually. Those who continue experiencing severe grief beyond a year might be experiencing prolonged grief. Psychological conditions such as anxiety or depression might also occur while you're experiencing grief. If you're having any of these issues, you might need to see a professional for help.

What are the stages of grief?

In her 1969 book, "On Death and Dying," Elisabeth Kübler-Ross described five stages of grief. These stages are:

- Denial: Attempting to deny that a loss has occurred.
- Anger: Feelings of anger, rage, envy, and resentment about the loss. Anger can be directed at the loss itself as well as those around you.
- Bargaining: Attempts to enter into some sort of agreement to avoid the truth of the loss. You might find yourself trying to find ways to control or change the outcome of the event.
- Depression: The experience of sadness over the loss. Overwhelming sorrow occurs as you begin to accept the loss.
- Acceptance: An acceptance of and adaptation to the loss.

Her theory allowed for difficult conversations about death and loss to be more accessible. It has also helped people gain support and understanding when grieving. However, over the years, many experts have expressed concern over the stages and what they see as an oversimplified view of grief. Many argue that grief is highly variable and doesn't occur in discrete stages. They believe that people might experience stages of grief in different orders or experience more than one stage at a time.

What has grief during the COVID pandemic been like?

The pandemic has brought a wide variety of expected and unexpected losses. People have experienced several different types of losses in a short period of time. Many have experienced both primary and secondary losses during the pandemic. Primary losses are easy to recognize. They include the death of someone close to you or a major life change like the loss of a job, income, or even your home.

Secondary losses are difficult outcomes that arise out of primary losses. These may include the loss of social connections, financial security, or hope.

You might have experienced grief during the past few months for a variety of reasons. You are not alone. Some people have been faced with one loss while others have



experienced several losses all at once.

On top of that, the lack of a clear end point has been a unique challenge of the pandemic. People continue to deal with loved ones who are ill or have died. Many struggle with financial challenges that have come with job loss or income changes.

Here are some suggestions for how to deal with grief:

- Connect with other people. Remember, grief is a normal response to loss. In most instances, people who are grieving don't need treatment, they need support. A supportive social network during the early stages of grief is often the best resource available. If you're struggling with grief, don't be afraid to reach out to friends and family and talk about what you're going through.
- Don't ignore what you're feeling. Caring for your mental and physical health when you are experiencing grief is also important. Accept that many emotions and behaviors are a normal response to grief. Don't judge your emotions. Acknowledge and face whatever emotions you're experiencing.
- Take care of your body. General self-care will be important, too, as you adapt to your loss. Make sure that you're eating a balanced diet, spending time outside, and getting enough exercise and sleep.
- Return to your routine, when you're ready. In the later stages of grief, in addition to continued social support, returning to the routines of your daily life can be helpful. For some, grief may include withdrawal from typical activities and isolation. Returning to your normal life can help you adapt to your loss.

Prolonged grief can be treated by talking to a therapist. Complicated grief treatment, a specific talk therapy targeting prolonged grief, has been found to be a beneficial treatment tool. In complicated grief treatment, your therapist will help you deal with grief complications and find more adaptive ways to mourn. You can also attend grief groups, which can provide additional social support. Some people who have prolonged grief might experience symptoms of other conditions, such as depression. If you are feeling anxious or depressed, talk to your healthcare provider for help.

The bottom line

Grief is a difficult but normal response to loss. The pandemic has been challenging, leading to both individual and collective grief. However, you can learn to adapt to life after loss, and there is help available if you're struggling to manage your grief.

If you're interested in learning more about grief, or are looking for help, check out the following resources:

- The Center for Complicated Grief
- The Dougy Center, The National Center for Grieving Children & Families

For more information contact ABM Insurance & Benefit Services at 281-448-3040.

ABM Bad Thanksgiving Jokes Of The Month...

Why was the turkey put in jail?

The police suspected fowl play.





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Wonderful company!! Samantha and Edlin are always ready to help with any questions or changes we have, or need to make. These ladies are very knowledgeable, and understand that we want good coverage, but can't afford a crazy high premium. I'm sure anyone in the office would be just as accommodating, professional, and as nice as can be. We couldn't be happier!

-Angel

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