



**Brain Injury Alliance  
Grief, COVID-19 and Beyond**

**Mandi Zucker, MSW CT**  
**Education Facilitator**  
[mzucker@bianj.org](mailto:mzucker@bianj.org)

1. Introduction
2. Objectives
3. What is Loss
  - a. Loss is the experience we all have when something that was meaningful in our lives is no longer there in the same way.
  - b. Loss can be due to death, but it can also be due to loss of relationships, structure, safety and other things.
4. What is grief?
  - a. Grief is the normal, natural reactions we all experience when we experience loss.
  - b. Grief is not pathological. It is normal. We should expect to have feelings when we experience a loss.
  - c. Grief is universal- we all experience it. But it is also unique and very personal. No one experiences grief in the same way.
5. What do I want when I am grieving?
  - a. Because grief is so individual, we all want different things when we are grieving. What might be helpful for one person, will not be for the next.
  - b. Take some time to consider what you want when you are grieving.
6. Often, we assume that other people would benefit from the things we want when we are grieving.
  - a. Consider what other people want when you are supporting them.
  - b. Don't assume you know based on what your own needs are.
  - c. The best way to figure out what someone else needs, is by asking them.
7. How are shame and grief related?
  - a. Shame is the experience that something is wrong with you.
  - b. When we are grieving, we often feel exposed and vulnerable. (The word "needy" comes to mind). Who wants to be thought of as "needy"?
  - c. When we are grieving, we often have needs. And that can make some people feel weak and shameful.
  - d. People often try to hide their shame by distracting others. How can we distract people so they don't see our vulnerabilities?
    - i. Drugs or alcohol
    - ii. Looking like we are in control
    - iii. Pushing people away by being mean
    - iv. Always making jokes
    - v. Isolating

(continued on Page 2)



- e. When we feel emotionally safe, we tend to let our guard down, and share our vulnerabilities. This allows people to feel more connected and less alone.
8. What is mourning?
  - a. Mourning is the outward expression of the normal feelings of grief.
  - b. We can mourn in public through support groups, talking with friends, singing, exercise, etc.
  - c. When we don't mourn, we often feel lonely and can express the grief in more dangerous, harmful ways.
9. How can we support others who are grieving?
  - a. Showing someone that you are present and available to them, lets them feel connected to you.
  - b. Allow people to share all of their feelings without judging them or trying to tell them not to feel that way.
  - c. Behavior is a communication. It is an expression of our inner worlds. If we could stop judging behavior, we would be more available to "hear" what the behavior is saying.
  - d. Allow people to share their stories without trying to lead them to an outcome.
  - e. Being quiet allows the griever to say more. Often, sharing their experience is the most helpful thing we can do.
  - f. Being supportive to others can take a toll on our own mental health. Make sure you are getting support as well.
  - g. There is no timeframe to "get over" grief. We all experience grief throughout our lifetimes and there is no "right" time to return to previous activities.
  - h. We often want certain things for friends and family that are grieving. But it is their journey, not ours. We need to learn to allow them to get there on their own.
10. Practice listening to someone without speaking for 2 minutes. Then ask them to listen to you. We don't often give each other even two minutes to share their experiences, but being heard can be very powerful.