Wellness Wednesday - April 22, 2020

Grief & Loss of the Student Experience

Presentation Materials
Wellness Wednesday

Grief & Loss

OF THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE
"I don’t think of all the misery, but of the beauty that still remains." - Anne Frank
Is what we are feeling grief?

Loss is something we are all experiencing amidst COVID-19.

We are living in a time of collective grief.
The losses we are experiencing are uprooting our understanding of the world around us.

**Individual Losses**
- Illness
- Death of loved ones
- Loss of employment
- Loss of identity

**Communal Losses**
- Watching work, healthcare, education, and economic systems destabilize
* Grief is natural, and most people are resilient *

It's okay to feel grief over what we are losing – it allows us to let grief do its job, so we can eventually move forward.

Grief is about **turning inward** and **recalibrating** – thinking about how we will need to **adapt**.
Many of the losses we're experiencing are ambiguous losses – meaning they're lacking in clarity and definition of a single point like a death.

People will experience losses we can't yet predict.
It helps to name and claim our grief

There is a vague sense of anxiety and a wordless suffering – and wrapping language around that is powerful.

Keeping a journal to put words to our losses – and can help to identify ways to move forward.
*Social Connections are Still Important*

Social support can be critical in helping move forward from grief, rather than get stuck in it.

This is a problem in an age of social distancing – especially when people are isolated in their homes away from their loved ones.

Stay connected with your social support networks though phone calls, video chat, text messages, and social media.
5 Stages of Grief

1. Denial
2. Anger
3. Bargaining
4. Despair
5. Acceptance
6. Wait, there's 6?!
**Denial**

- Intellectual and emotional rejection of something that is clear and obvious
- Much needed survival mechanism
- Gives us a chance to fight back when attacked – when otherwise the pain of the attack would leave us vulnerable
- Power in denying physical pain
- Emotional pain can be denied in the same way

**Today denial sounds like:**
- "This whole thing is overblown, there's no way school will be closed for the rest of the year!"
- It's the same as the flu. People get the flu every year and hardly anyone dies."
Anger

• Empowering feeling

• An attempt to gain control over our fears

• Instead of accepting and dealing with a problem, we turn hostile, blaming others, engaging in power struggles, externalizing the issue, and sometimes refusing to comply with the rules

• Anger today sounds like:
  • "This is Benedictine's fault. If they weren't so soft, graduation wouldn't have been cancelled."
  • "I don't care what the governor of my state says about sheltering in place, I'm going to practice today."
**Bargaining**

- Occurs when denial breaks down and we start to acknowledge reality, but we are not ready to give up illusion that we have some control.
- We try to **compromise** to find an easier, less painful way out.

**Today bargaining sounds like:**

- "It's ok to spend time with others as long as they wash their hands before they see me."
- "This will all be over by Summertime. I'll be safe until then, and then we can go back to normal."
Despair

• Nothing can help now, despite evidence to the contrary
• Attempts at bargaining haven't worked

• Today despair sounds like:
  • "I can't go to school; I can't earn money. Pretty soon, I'll be relying on my parents."
  • "This epidemic is the new normal. I can say goodbye to the college experience."
Acceptance

• Occurs when we finally **acknowledge and surrender** to the facts, whatever those facts happen to be

• We can **stop denying and fighting reality** – and we can start dealing as effectively as we can with what has happened / what is happening

• **Today acceptance sounds like:**
  • "I **can't control** the pandemic, but I can do my part by sheltering in place, washing my hands, and staying positive."
  • "The fact that I can't leave my house doesn't mean my life has to stop. I **can** do work from home, and I still **can** connect with my friends and family via phone or internet. I **can** also enjoy the extra time I have with my loved ones at home."
Finding Meaning

• How we choose to honor lost loved ones
• How we remember what we lost in a hopeful way
• "Closure"
• There is more to grief than acceptance, it does not end there
DAY 4 OF FAMILY

SELF QUARANTINE
1. Adjust your dreams and goals to work within the "new normal" of this crisis.

2. See the loss of season-ending competitions as an extended prep period for next season.

3. Identify areas you need to work on in your sport's development and focus on strengthening those areas.

4. Use this time away from sports to seek balance in your lives and pursue aspects of life that you didn't have time for before the crisis (e.g. focusing on school, enjoy a hobby that has been neglected, try something new and different).
### Advice for Student Athletes Continued

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<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Respond</strong></td>
<td>See your response to the crisis as an opportunity to become mentally stronger, which will benefit next season.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Create Routines</strong></td>
<td>Create new routines and structure around school, physical conditioning, and social life.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Take Action</strong></td>
<td>Decreases feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, &amp; victimhood; increases sense of competence, feelings of control, &amp; optimism.</td>
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Resilience

Toughness, the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties

How do we strengthen our resilience muscle?
Resilience from Grief & Loss

David Kessler
Resilience from Grief & Loss

Find Balance

• If your mind is making the worst image, make youself think the best image, too!
• Neither should be ignored, neither should dominate.

Come into the Present

• Meditation
• Mindfulness

• You can think about how to let go of what you can't control.
Resilience from Grief & Loss

**Stock up on Compassion**

- Everyone has different levels of fear & grief.
- It will manifest in different ways.
- Be patient

**Keep Trying!**

- There is something powerful about naming this as grief.
- It helps us feel what is inside of us.
- Allow yourself to feel your feelings.
Questions???
Thank you for attending Wellness Wednesday!

If you need further assistance or would like to speak to a counselor, please call the Benedictine University Counseling Center at 630-829-1800.
Happy 7th Birthday Shelby!
Stages of Grief

1. Denial
   - Intellectual and emotional rejection of something clear and obvious
   - Survival mechanism
2. Anger
   - Attempt to gain control over our fears
   - Instead of accepting and dealing with the problem, we turn hostile, blaming others, engaging in power struggles, externalizing the issue, and sometimes refusing to comply with the rules
3. Bargaining
   - Occurs when denial breaks down and we start to acknowledge reality – but we are not yet ready to give up the illusion that we have some control
4. Despair (depression)
   - Attempts at bargaining haven’t worked
   - Nothing can help now, despite evidence to the contrary
5. Acceptance
   - Occurs when we finally acknowledge and surrender to the facts, whatever those facts happen to be
   - We can stop denying and fighting reality
6. Finding Meaning
   - Aspect of resilience
   - Finding a way to honor who or what was lost
Radical Acceptance

- Radical means all the way, complete and total.
- It is accepting your mind, your heart, and your body.
- It’s when you stop fighting reality, stop throwing tantrums because reality is not the way you want it, and let go of bitterness.

Radical Acceptance is NOT approval, compassion, love, passivity, or against change

What has to be Accepted?

- Reality is as it is (the facts about the past and the present are the facts, even if you don't like them)
- There are limitations on the future for everyone (but only realistic limitations need to be accepted)
- Everything has a cause (including events and situations that cause you pain and suffering)
- Life can be worth living even with painful events in it

Why Accept Reality?

- Rejecting reality does not change reality
- Changing reality requires first accepting reality
- Pain can't be avoided; it is nature's way of signaling that something is wrong
- Rejecting pain turns into suffering
- Refusing to accept reality can keep you stuck in unhappiness, bitterness, anger, sadness, shame, or other painful emotions
- Acceptance may lead to sadness, buy deep calmness usually follows
- The path out of hell is through misery. By refusing to accept the misery that is part of climbing out of hell, you fall back into hell
Practicing Radical Acceptance

1. Observe that you are questioning or fighting reality
   • “It shouldn’t be this way”
2. Remind yourself that the unpleasant reality is just as it is and cannot be changed
   • “This is what happened”
3. Remind yourself that there are causes for the reality
   • Some sort of history led to this moment
   • Consider how people’s lives have been shaped by a series of factors/events
   • Given these causal factors, this reality had to occur just this way
   • “This is how things happened”
4. Practice accepting with your whole self (mind, body, spirit)
   • Be creative in involving your whole self
   • Use accepting self-talk
   • Use relaxation
   • Be mindful of your breath
   • Half-smiling and willing hands while thinking about what feels unacceptable
   • Pray
   • Go to a place that helps bring you to acceptance
   • Use Imagery
5. Practice opposite action
   • List all behaviors you would do if you did accept the facts
   • Then act as if you have already accepted the facts
6. Cope ahead with events that seem unacceptable
   • Imagine (in your mind’s eye) believing what you don’t want to accept.
   • Rehearse in your mind what you would do if you accepted what seems unacceptable
7. Attend to body sensations as you think about what you need to accept
8. Allow yourself to feel disappointment, sadness, or grief
9. Acknowledge that life can be worth living even when there is pain
10. Do pros and cons if you find yourself resisting practicing acceptance
Wellness Wednesday Resources

Apps

What’s Up – app designed to help individual’s cope with depression, anxiety, stress, etc. Utilizes a positive and negative habit tracker, access to grounding exercises, and help identify thinking patterns.

MoodKit – App with 200+ mood improvement activities

Pacifica – Guided deep breathing and muscle relaxation exercises, mood tracker

SuperBetter – Video game style app. You create a secret identity and progress through quests – utilizing self-care activities like drinking water or reaching out to an old friend.

Headspace – Guided meditation exercises. Search by topic.

Nike Run Club – Great addition to any workout – running especially. Audio guided runs narrated by Coach Bennett. Great when you need some guidance or just company.

Podcasts

Griefcast – Tackles subjects often tip-toed around and faces them head-on. Uses humor and experiences of others.

Terrible, Thanks for Asking – For adults (language) who want to hear about or share in other people’s experiences of grief.

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