

Bitesize

Six ways to cope with lockdown loss

Coronavirus has brought loss into all our lives. Even if we have been fortunate enough not to lose someone close to us, we are all dealing with loss of some kind.

In only a few short weeks, life has been turned upside down. Many of our routines have changed overnight. Many of the people we rely on have become distanced from us, or are only available on our phone or computer screens. So, how do we find ways forward in these strange times?

1. Take time to adapt

As human beings, we feel this kind of loss very deeply. We are social creatures and being separated from the rest of our 'pack' is a very difficult thing. Millions of people around the world are missing their lives right now, and it is entirely natural to feel sad, anxious or angry about it. Feeling grief in response to the many losses we are all having to endure is our way of gradually adapting and learning to live with a new situation.



2. It's OK not to be OK

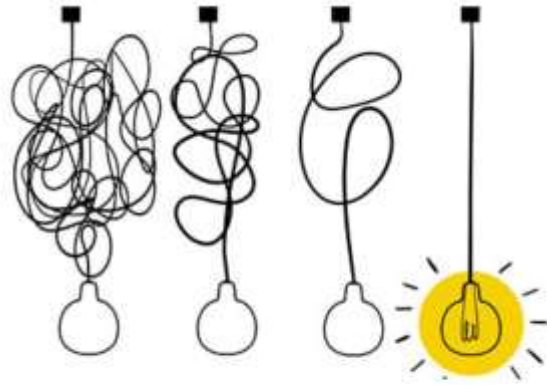
You will have missed out on events that you expected to remember forever, like your last day at school with your friends or the exams that you hoped would pave the way into your future job or studies. You will be missing seeing people, celebrating birthdays, being able to give someone a hug and - when things feel difficult - having a real shoulder to cry on. The disappointment and uncertainty created by this kind of loss is very real, and it is OK not to be OK with it. It's also OK to talk about it and recognise that you are not alone.



3. Things to look forward to

However, unlike many losses we face in life, these are losses that we are all experiencing together. None of this is your fault, and huge effort is going into making sure that you don't continue to lose out once this is over.

Right now, plans are being put into place that will transform the losses of the last few weeks into delays or temporary disruptions. This will allow you to look forward to those things you missed, or new ways of doing them, once this is all over.



4. Better than before

Some losses provide unexpected opportunities to learn to do familiar things differently. New possibilities appear every day as people turn to their creative energies. 'I can't do that' becomes 'but I can do this ...' Social media can give multiple opportunities to connect, create and thrive. Remember, different can be good. And sometimes, better than



what went before. So, how can you use your energy to turn the disruption around? Try an online fitness class with friends, recording music across five different bedrooms, or making your own video diary for when this all becomes a distant memory.

5. Hold each other in mind

We are all trying to get better at being together while apart. This can help to shrink the losses that initially felt overwhelming, turning them into challenges to grab and do something with. Talking to the people you know and love is especially important right now. Stay in touch with them. These are the people who can hold you in mind, even when you find it difficult



to recognise yourself and the world around you. Mixing up the way you hang out at home, and online, can help to get more of what you need to stay well and positive. An online quiz might be fun with a group of friends, while talking about how you feel might be easier with just one or two people.

6. Look to the future

Your brain is an amazing thing. Young people learn more quickly and better than at any other time in our lives. Your mind is agile and, especially when you team up with other people, it can imagine all kinds of new possibilities. Use your mind to distinguish between avoidable and unavoidable losses, and make sense of these with the support of those you trust. Turn to the people around you to help you to talk - and feel what you feel - about living with the unavoidable losses. Then turn the avoidable ones into something amazing for you, now and in the future.



By Dr Roslyn Law, Consultant Clinical Psychologist at The Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families.

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