

LOVESSES OF MANY KINDS

Loss is typically a word that we use when talking about the death of someone. However, in the midst of the current worldwide health crisis, there are a number of life events that are being seriously altered or missed entirely that also fall into the category of loss.

These additional losses that you and your children are experiencing now may intensify the feelings of grief that you have already been experiencing because of the death of your loved one, or may trigger feelings that you may have assumed were long behind you.

LOSS OF FINANCIAL STABILITY

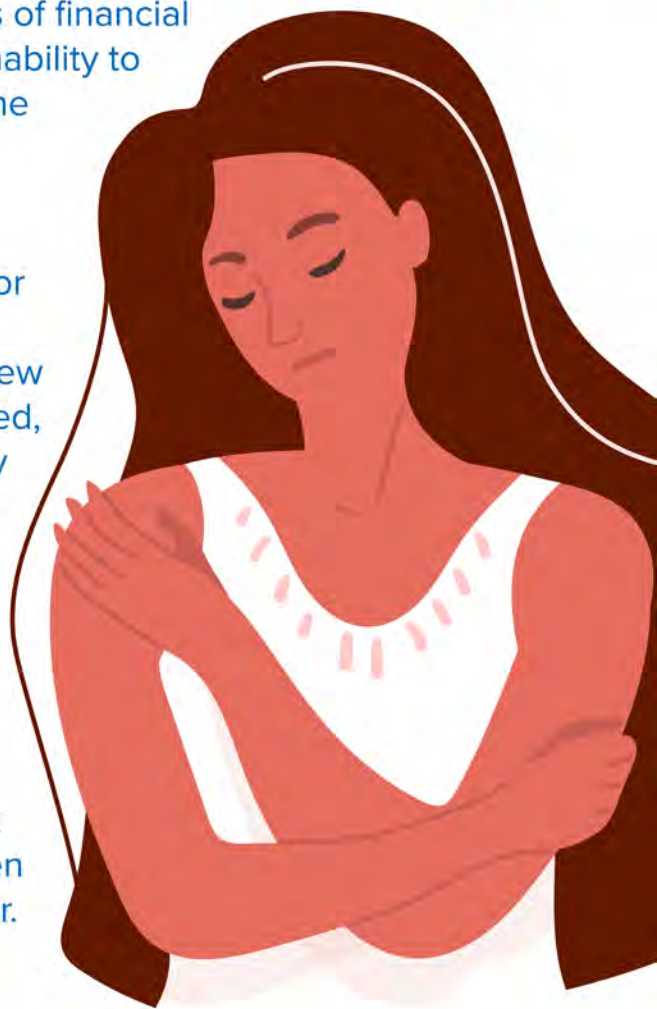
It goes without saying that the current health crisis has put many families in financial crisis. Businesses are closing or struggling, workers are being laid off or their hours drastically cut, and some are unable to work because of illness. This loss of financial stability can set families up for increased stress and the inability to focus on their emotional needs like – including grieving the death of a loved one.

LOSS OF MAJOR LIFE EVENTS

Many families have had to significantly alter plans for major life events, some that were expected to create lasting memories. Funerals are being delayed or limited to very few attendees, weddings and graduations are being postponed, babies are being born with only one parent in the delivery room, birthdays are being celebrated from afar and vacations are cancelled. The loss of these major life events entirely, or the loss of the way they had been planned to unfold – perhaps for years – is heartbreaking for many families.

LOSS OF TYPICAL ROUTINES

While the loss of finances and major life events come first to mind, it's also important to remember that many children have lost the routine and predictability of their school year. Children are missing friends and social supports, sports



seasons, and activities like musicals and talent shows that they had been practicing for and eagerly awaiting. These losses can be just as significant for children as the loss of major life events and can cause them to feel a range of emotions.

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP MY CHILD?

Adults often want to solve problems or say things to make children feel better, yet sometimes the very best thing we can do is to be an active listener.

For example, if a child were to say, *"I am so frustrated (or sad, or angry) that I can't do my song for the talent show,"* it's natural for adults to think about responding with a message like *"It's okay, there will be other talent shows."* While this response has positive intentions, the underlying message that the child hears is that their feelings don't matter. Instead, we can focus on the child's feelings with a response like, *"I can understand feeling frustrated and upset about not getting to perform something that you practiced so hard for. That must be really hard."*

This response does not offer a solution, but it validates the difficult feelings that the child is experiencing and lets them know that the adult has heard them and understands.

Another example of something you might hear at home during this time might be, *"I can't believe my friends can't come over, this is so unfair!"*

A way to respond which shows that you hear the child's feelings and empathize with them could be something like – *"It sounds like you're really missing your friends; I don't blame you for feeling upset. This is all really hard."*

Active listening is one of the most powerful ways we can show our children we care for them, especially in times of loss and uncertainty when they need to feel heard. Listening is a way to show others that we are there for them.

As Fred Rogers has said, *"In times of stress, the best thing we can do for each other is to listen with our ears and with our hearts."*

If you find that you too need someone to listen with their ears and their hearts, remember that the staff at the Highmark Caring Place are always here to help.

