

During this time of limited contact and connection, grief can accompany the struggles people are experiencing with COVID-19 challenges. Times are uncertain, and with that, come questions: How long will this last? When can we return to normal? Who can I see and who should I not see? Is it safe to work in an office or on a jobsite? Will I stay healthy? Should I send my kids back to school or keep them home? Will they stay healthy? The list goes on, and sometimes, there are no answers. Many things are out of our control.

## COVID Challenges

### Isolation and quarantine

- Keep ourselves and our families active. Start a new hobby or revisit an old favorite pastime. Host a family game night and play board games or cards. Grow an indoor or outdoor garden. Organize your living space and purge things you don't use. Go for drives in the country and appreciate the beauty. Keep a journal so you can look back on it. Take care of your body: Eat healthy (more fruits and vegetables) and exercise (make it a challenge between family members or with yourself). Be kind to yourself and allow your mind, body and heart to grieve.

### No large gatherings: weddings, funerals, etc.

- Be creative with small gatherings, distancing and/or postponing gatherings until a later date. Big doesn't always equal the best. Small intimate ceremonies and outdoor gatherings are also meaningful. Be creative while planning a funeral or memorial service. An outdoor service or graveside memorial can be planned for a few more people or a smaller family service can be held now. A larger gathering/celebration of life can be planned for later, such as on a date that was special to the person who died (birthday or anniversary). Funerals and memorial services can also be livestreamed online, so friends and family can join from anywhere.

### Lack of physical touch

- Connect in other ways, such as sending photos electronically or by mail, making regularly scheduled calls and getting creative (example: specific sign language signs for "hugs" and "kisses" you can exchange with your loved one).

### Living facility regulations/decline in love one's physical and/or cognitive health

- Check-in with the nursing home or assisted living facility often about changes to their regulations. Facilities know the importance of connection for both the patient and family. Many facilities try to coordinate some form of face-to-face visits, if they are able. You can also get creative on how to spend time with your loved one. Phone calls, video chat (FaceTime, Skype, etc.) are great resources during this time. Gather family outside of windows and share music, games, etc., while your loved one can watch and enjoy from inside. Position your loved one so they can watch drive-by celebrations, such as a birthday, anniversary or holiday gathering, from their room or outside their room.

*(continued on reverse)*

## School starting or not starting

- Be positive with children of all ages. Be creative by forming pods with other families, so contact is limited, but your children can still interact with other kids. Explore childcare options, including checking out different daycare facilities, having a high school or college age student help with childcare and distance learning, or asking other family members for help. Hopefully, your employment will work with you to make this easier. Make masks fun and a positive experience for everyone.

“If you cannot make a change, change the way you have been thinking.”

- Maya Angelo

## COVID Emotions & Feelings

### Anger

- Choose how you react to a situation. Often in this COVID environment, we don't get the outcome we desire. Anger is an easy “go-to” for the human psyche, but it isn't the most helpful. We can choose to not direct our anger toward family members, facility or other staff. When anger threatens to boil over, take a walk, sit alone in a quiet place, read a book or meditate. These are things you can control when everything seems out of control.

### Guilt

- Change the things we say to ourselves: “Should have,” “could have” and “would have” statements used to shame yourself are not helpful. If facility restrictions kept us away, remember, that is out of your control. If there are things you feel you need to do or say, now's the time. Write a letter. Make a call. Give or ask for forgiveness. These are things you can do.

### COVID fatigue

- Take breaks. Stay at home where you don't need a mask or don't need to distance. Get takeout and set up a dining experience in your own dining room. When you find yourself feeling like you don't care if you have your mask on or don't care if you distance from others or simply don't feel like doing these things, this is COVID fatigue. This time of heightened awareness and precautions is exhausting, and either intentionally or not, we stop doing the extra things. We stop wearing a mask here and there, or go out with friends now and then. Get back on track. Remind yourself how important these things are and that the simple steps we take, like washing hands and wearing masks, will shorten this pandemic.

### Despair

- Seek assistance. If you are feeling hopeless or a deep sense of sadness, it's OK to ask for help. Find a trusted friend or family member who will listen without judgement. Reach out to a counselor or a therapist. Concentrate on changing your outlook on the situation because that is something you can control. You are the only one you can change.

Remember, you are dealing with one of the most difficult times in your life—be kind to yourself and those around you. You're faced with isolation, separation and uncertainty. There are things about this you can't change. While you may not be able to change the situation, you can always change your mindset and reaction toward it. A positive outlook can go a long way in what seems like a negative situation. Giving grace and kindness to others and to yourself can also change how we view a situation. Change what you can, and allow yourself and others grace for the things we cannot change.