

# Mental Health Services for Clark and Madison Counties

January 12, 2021

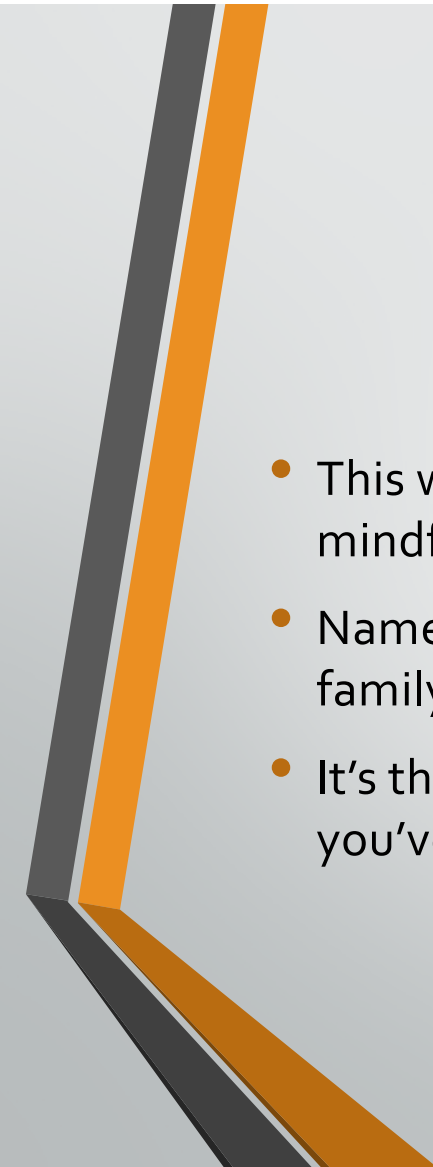
# COVID19 Stress Management

- Kubler-Ross's Grief and Stages of Loss
- We can put a name on what many of us are feeling... Grief. *If we can name it, we can manage it.*
- **Is some of what we're feeling grief?**
- Yes. We feel the world has changed, and it has. We know this is temporary, but it doesn't feel that way, and we realize things will be different.
- Just as going to the airport is forever, different from how it was before 9/11, things will change and this is the point at which they changed.
- This is hitting us and we're grieving. Collectively. We are not used to this kind of collective grief in the air.



## We are feeling anticipatory grief.

- Anticipatory grief is that feeling we get about what the future holds when we're uncertain. It is the mind going to the future and imagining the worst. Like thinking about losing a parent someday, or someone you love.
- Our mind knows something bad is happening, but we can't see it. This has broken our sense of safety.
- We've never *collectively* lost our sense of general safety like this, this is new.



## To manage stress, you want to ***come into the present.***

- This will be familiar advice to anyone who has meditated or practiced mindfulness but it is surprising how calming this can be.
- Name five things in the room. There's a computer, a chair, a picture of family, an old rug, and a coffee mug.
- It's that simple. Breathe. Realize that in the present moment, nothing you've anticipated has happened. In this moment, you're okay.



## Let go of what you can't control.

- What your neighbor or others are doing is out of your control.
- What is in your control is staying six feet away from them and washing your hands. Focus on that.
- This really will work to ease some of the discomfort.

# What else you can do to manage all this stress.

- Understanding stages of grief can help.
- Stages of grief are not linear, you will move back and forth between them. These are normal stages of any grief.
  - There's denial, which we may have thought early on: This virus won't affect us.
  - There's anger: You're making me stay home and taking away my activities.
  - There's bargaining: Okay, if I social distance for a while everything will be better, right?
  - There's sadness: I don't know when this will end.
  - And finally, there's acceptance: This is happening; I have to figure out how to proceed.

# Acceptance

- Acceptance, as you might imagine, is where the power lies. We find control in acceptance.
- *I can wash my hands. I can keep a safe distance. I can learn how to connect to others virtually.*

## Stock up on compassion.

- Everyone will have different levels of fear and grief and it manifests in different ways.
- A coworker might get snippy one day and you think, *"That's not like this person; that's how they're dealing with this. I'm seeing their fear and anxiety"*. So be patient.
- Think about who someone usually is and not who they seem to be in this moment.



# What if you understand this and are still overwhelmed?

- Keep trying. There is something powerful about naming this as grief. It helps us feel what's inside of us. Someone may say, *"I'm having a hard time,"* or *"I cried last night."* When you name it, you feel it and it moves through you. Emotions need motion. Let's acknowledge what we are going through.
- We may tell ourselves things like, *"I feel sad, but I shouldn't feel that; other people have it worse.* We can – we should – stop at the first feeling. *I feel sad. Let me go for five minutes to feel sad.*
- You should feel your sadness and fear and anger whether or not someone else is feeling something. Fighting it doesn't help because your body is producing the feeling. If we allow the feelings to happen, they'll happen in an orderly way, and it empowers us. Then we're not victims.



## In an orderly way?

- Yes. Sometimes we try not to feel what we're feeling because we have this image of a "gang of feelings". If I feel sad and let that in, it'll never go away. The gang of bad feelings will overrun me.
- The truth is a feeling moves through us. Feelings need motion. We feel it and it goes and then we go to the next feeling. There's no gang out to get us.
- Let yourself feel the grief and keep going.

## Stay in the here and now.

- Practice mindfulness.
- Find something you can see, something you can smell, something you can hear, something you can taste and something you can feel.
- Like your first cup of coffee in the morning: You can hear it brewing, you can see it, you can smell it, you can taste it and you can feel it as you drink.
- This practice of using all your senses in any moment throughout the day will help to be “grounded” and be in the moment.
- This helps reduce anxiety and worrying about what might happen next.

# This pandemic will come to an end.

- This pandemic will come to an end yet will change our way of life in some way forever.
- We can take time to feel our losses and look forward to our future.
- Process using the SELF model.
  - Safety – how has this impacted my physical, moral, and psychological safety?
  - Emotion – how is this making me feel?
  - Loss – recognize the losses.
  - Future – what does the future look like?



## These strategies do work.

- Practicing these strategies, understanding the stages of grief, and processing change using the SELF model will help us process all changes and events that impact us.
- Many events have occurred this past year and are continuing to happen.
- Stay grounded, stay in the here and now.
- Practice mindfulness!



# Self-Care

- Be sure to practice self-care.
- Name 2 things you can do when sitting at a desk or driving.
- Name 2 things you can do in a short period of time when not at home.
- Name 2 things you can do that take more time.



## When to seek help:

- When anxiety and/or depression interfere with daily tasks for an extended period of time (3-6 months).
- When the duration of anxiety and/or depression last as long as 6 months.
- Never hesitate to ask for help.



# Thank you!

Mental Health Services

Open access: Monday – Friday, 9 am – 2 pm

(937) 399-9500