

What May Happen As We Come Out Of Lockdown?

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Grieving over the sad death of HRH Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, by all faiths and none, highlights also the need to recognise and deal with the losses due to coronavirus in the last year and to somehow prepare for coming out of lockdown.

It's a very obvious observation that we have all suffered quite a bit of loss as we have experienced the pandemic. Some of it was due to the pandemic. Some of it just what happens. We may not be aware of just how much loss we have suffered.

There have been many bereavements, of course. But these has been compounded by the loss of the usual "rites", from being present to say farewell to having a funeral with more than a few mourners.

There has also been the loss of employment for many. That may mean redundancy, but furlough has also meant a loss of productivity, human contact, personal development, and feeling of value associated with the workplace. The workplace and work experience may be very different after lockdown.

There has been a loss of memories for many. Weddings and other significant life events have had to go on hold at least. Husbands have not been able to attend births. Birthdays and other anniversaries have either migrated to zoom or haven't been held at all.

There has been a loss of simply human contact. For some this has been almost total with supplies being delivered (at a distance) and infirmity meaning even a "Boris walk" hasn't been possible. So, no one to bump into, no one for a casual exchange of news.

This also means a loss of physical activity for many, especially in sporting terms. The enjoyment as spectators has also been severely restricted. Another type of loss.

There has also been a loss of meaning and value that people derived from various spiritual activities. Places of worship have been closed. Zoom etc has helped, but there has still been loss. Again, this has partly been about loss of human interaction, but there is also a loss at another level; one less easy to assess perhaps.

Hopefully, the point has been made, there has been widespread and significant loss shared by everyone in some way. What effects may this have on us as we recover and seek to help others do the same? In some ways all losses lead to a "bereavement experience". Looking at what we know of that may help us navigate what is to come.

Denial can be part of bereavement. "It's not that important. We'll soon be over it. No big deal". This may be operating in those who have denied covid exists, but, as lockdown is eased, it may become more significant in our behaviour.

Anger often arises too in bereavement. It can "earth" onto those trying to help as well. How much of the lockdown protests or the "kill the bill" protests and resistance to vaccines, could have been fuelled at least to some extent by bereavement anger?

Disorientation often comes with the shock of bereavement. The inability to settle to tasks and the lack of motivation may accompany loss. Alternatively, a sort of bargaining process can set in with arguing with people or the deity about what has happened.

There is, hopefully, also a resolution of grief. But, as we know, the different aspects of grief experience can recur or become cyclic.

So, becoming aware of this, how can we move out of lockdown and help others do the same? That's what we are hoping you will give some answers to!

Here are some "of the top of the head" suggestions.

1. Be aware. Obvious really but noting how much loss there has been an important first step to managing it.
2. Don't be put off course by explosive reactions of anger or grief. Stay with the person, with yourself. Don't crowd but give room whilst keeping in touch.
3. Realise this will all take time to resolve. Recovery will not be overnight no matter how much we wish it might be.
4. Encourage people to talk about their losses no matter how small they may seem to be. Perhaps we must find extra "space" for this and encourage employers to see the need for it.
5. Don't get swept up in any "denial euphoria". Stay alert to the pain that is there, and which will surface possibly several times.
6. Make yourself available to "soul space" and then to others. We put it that way so that we see our own loss needing healing as well. Non-managerial or friend/peer support may help us here. Availability to others will need our own souls to be nurtured if we are to be of use to others.

Anything else? We are facing a very big challenge as lockdown begins to end. Please, share your ideas with us! And if you are looking for ways to find help, www.workplacewellbeing.org.uk might be a place to start!

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