

Speaker 1 ([00:03](#)):

Thank you for joining us for today's webinar, Living with Grief and Loss brought to you by Cigna. Please note that copies of the presentation slides and handouts are available for download in the drop down box on the lower left side of the player window. Our presenter today is Dan Orfield. Dan has been an employee assistance consultant with Cigna for 28 years. He provides consultations on workplace concerns related to job performance, substance abuse, organizational change, and crisis and disaster response. He is a licensed psychologist, a licensed professional counselor, and a certified employee assistance professional. And now, Mr. Dan Orfield.

Dan Orfield ([00:45](#)):

Thank you. And everyone just welcome for joining in today of what is actually just a challenging topic for us to talk about, but it's so timely and so important that we take the time to consider what do we need to find our way through getting through grief and losses. And we're all experiencing some sort of losses. We've lost, um, uh, in our culture, mobility or the ability to be connected to friends or to do the things we want to do, some have lost jobs.

Dan Orfield ([01:11](#)):

We've had losses that go all the way to the extreme of someone who's passed away as a result. And so I just want to encourage you that loss has always been part of our lives. And yet here we are in a much more complex season with more sadness and grief. And, and we have been struggling with how we manage this, because again, today in the midst of a pandemic, it touches all of our lives and it's actually touching across the world.

Dan Orfield ([01:39](#)):

So it's an experience, we don't have a blueprint for something on this scale and how do we find our way through? So in this, every day is bringing us a new challenge. We have erosions of what we used to call life as usual or what's normal for us. And wrapped up inside of that challenge is in a sense of loss. We've lost predictability of life, we've lost connections, the loss of a sense of security and safety, even when we want to go out the door and just buy some groceries, many other things.

Dan Orfield ([02:10](#)):

So what we don't recognize is there are some intangible things that we may be having and that could be what we're feeling in response to those losses. And that whole process actually is the process of grief. And it's important that we bring that to the front, have a look at that and have a, a way to identify and recognize what it's doing in us. So finding our way through that grief, it's going to be looking at things that are stressful, sometimes it's going to involve intense emotions.

Dan Orfield ([02:38](#)):

And as difficult as that is, the challenge can become overwhelming if you know someone who's actually died. So with many of our personal resources being, are used to just keep up with our daily coping and challenges and changes that are happening to pull together the strength to navigate the deep and the, the heaviness of a loss of a loved one, a friend, a coworker, that's almost feeling impossible in a season when we're already feeling exhausted.

Dan Orfield ([03:08](#)):

So today we want to talk about it. I want to talk to you on this unique challenge that we're facing, look at some thoughts that might help us find our way to get through this with greater strength. So as we look at our seminar goals, we're discussing the experience about what grief is like in these challenging unique times. We want to understand some common reactions to grief. It's a part of our human existence.

Dan Orfield ([03:31](#)):

And so we've done grief and loss before, it's how we get through changes. So we're going to examine some, some things we already know. We want to share strategies for coping with grief. And we also want to explore how to offer comfort to someone else who's experienced a loss. So, uh, as we look today, we want to begin to examine that we don't have uh, a roadmap. These times are unprecedented to identify with how we got along with things, so our old standards of the way life is supposed to be.

Dan Orfield ([04:02](#)):

So though we feel lost, we don't have a feeling of an anchor or uh, that we're just essentially now feeling stressed and we're struggling with the idea that we're having a hard time and that we are having a hard time and we, we should be able to uh, give ourselves some freedom to be able to deal with that. But tears may surprise us. They may show up when we're surrounded by losses.

Dan Orfield ([04:26](#)):

So it's really important to understand that if you're feeling stressed and you're sad, you are feeling normal right now. Actually this is to be expected. We've been experiencing um, losses on so many levels. We have canceled celebrations, work and professional protocols are totally turned upside down. You have uh, headlines, they're coming at us constantly. We're getting, uh, scary news about our finances, about our financial world, ever present fears that we have about our own health and safety, we're concerned about our loved ones and all those come together and create this perfect storm of uncertainty and it comes through to us as a process of grieving.

Dan Orfield ([05:09](#)):

So when we lose something we value and whether it's a tangible thing, it could be this intangible sense of our safety, we grieve. So the stress is compounded by the fact that we're missing support so we would normally turn to, so we could usually sit down together, have a talk, hug each other, just lean on each other for some sense of strength and not going through it alone.

Dan Orfield ([05:32](#)):

But for now, that's all done at best it's navigated virtually or otherwise, we could be in a much greater level of isolation. And so all of us are collectively facing the same challenges. We may not always have the emotional resources to offer comfort and support to others when they need it. So another aspect of that is that we are challenged by the fact we don't have a lot of predictability. This is an open ended story right now we're facing.

Dan Orfield ([06:02](#)):

We have unknowns, we don't have a sense of a beacon of hope on where it's going so we could look forward to a specific point in the future to know that we'll have gotten through it. So that adds to us anxiety. And that's like a layer of this, this anticipatory worry that's wondering about, are we going to be

okay? And then layer that on top of grief on losses. What's next? Is it going to be worse? Are we also grieving the thing that we are fearing that we're losing in the future?

Dan Orfield ([06:32](#)):

So all those unknowns are distressing and we're waiting for some relief and we're not quite sure yet where are we going to find the handles that kinda give us hope and direction? So as I said, we don't have a blueprint for all this, but there are some attitudes that we can adopt and some things we can examine that can be helpful. So the slide says to counter balance, we want to permit the feelings that you do have. And so there's really no shame in having feelings that come up during this time.

Dan Orfield ([07:02](#)):

So a piece of advice would be simply name it, put words on how you're feeling. I feel sad. I feel scared. I feel just okay today. And giving yourself the time and the permission to feel that and to not make excuses or, or feeling ashamed that you're having a feeling. We want to hold and balance the worst case scenario, because it's tempting for us to be self-protective that we would think about, well, what's the worst that could happen as we sort of brace ourselves and try to get ready for what could come our way.

Dan Orfield ([07:35](#)):

But we can't stay there entirely, that's overwhelming. So we want to balance with that what are some possible best case outcomes to keep us from just getting stuck in the mire of worry or fear. So try to find your way back to the present moment. And that's going to be really our greatest strength here, is to stay in the present, keep your thoughts and your feeling focused on the here and now as much as possible and that's going to be the outcome of being balanced.

Dan Orfield ([08:04](#)):

We also want to let go of what we cannot control. Grief may show up to us as a frustration or an anger when we can't control the outcome. So it's important in a moment like that, take a deep breath, try to take an acknowledgement, hold the breath and think about the thing that's bothering you that moment. And then exhale slowly and breathe. And maybe do two or three long deep breaths to begin to acknowledge and say, "Okay, I can't control that thing." And then as you exhale, you're releasing the thing.

Dan Orfield ([08:34](#)):

So we're going to talk about some strategies that give us some simple ways to keep anxiety and overwhelm under as much control as possible. They're going to be there, how do we not have them grow out of proportion? So by the way, if in the face of all those losses with the pandemic, if you've lost a specific person to the death, the grief is even more profound than we normally would experience.

Dan Orfield ([08:57](#)):

So if I can just say at the outset here, I want to offer my deepest sympathies. If you're coping with a loss of someone that you care about in these times, a family member, a friend, a coworker, a neighbor, and whether that was because of the Coronavirus or some other causes, grief during a loss of life right now in this context is multiplied by many factors. It's many more layers, uh, partly it's because we don't have time to prepare for that grief. It's sudden.

Dan Orfield ([09:27](#)):

The, the Coronavirus progresses so quickly that where we didn't have any knowledge of the person's life being in danger, suddenly they're gone. We are not able to travel to be connected so therefore like we typically would be at the bedside of someone who's dying or to be there to help support someone going through a challenging recovery. We can't be there if they're in quarantine. And so we're not connected to be able to have final words or have the chance to touch and to be in connection.

Dan Orfield ([09:55](#)):

This is going to bring about strong emotions that can trigger feelings of anguish. We can feel helpless. We can feel guilty that we should be there, even though we're not being permitted to make that kind of contact. The usual way we cope with things is we have rituals that we walk things through with memorials, the chance to maybe have parting conversations. And because of the distance we're required to create, we're not able to do those in nearly as an intimate way.

Dan Orfield ([10:25](#)):

And those rituals help us find perspective to kind of put some meaning on what's going on. Like a funeral for instance, helps put closure on this, the significance of a loss that we've gone through. And if those aren't happening right now, we're feeling a little bit robbed of that ability to do that normal processing that helps us find our way. And all the while we have the new stories that continue to flow that remind us of the sorrows of all the continued pain happening day by day, the continued fears of safeties, and that just doesn't go away. So we have to be mindful of how that's bombarding us as well.

Dan Orfield ([11:02](#)):

So I don't want to take too much time to point out just how difficult this is. You know, you know how difficult it is, you're feeling it. But sometimes we need to be reminded that our feelings, even the really hard ones, they are actually quite normal and so they are part of our human existence, part of our life experience. So it's going to take time to find a way going forward. So simply understanding what you're feeling and why, this can be a huge first step in your journey.

Dan Orfield ([11:33](#)):

So let's just talk a little bit about grief itself, understanding grief. What is it? Grief is a spontaneous response. It's a lot of ways unlearned or maybe we've observed other people do grief and losses in the past in front that we have identified with what that looks like. Uh, it's going to bring about maybe physical, uh, pain, physical interactions in our body, emotional reactions. Uh, the reaction is going to look very individual to each person.

Dan Orfield ([12:03](#)):

And we may be responding to the same loss. We may be in the same family or closely connected network of people, but each one of us may decide what it means a little differently on the inside. We may show what that feels like on the outside, even to the exact same loss, it's all very individual. So what are some of the things we notice as uh, grief begins to happen. Maybe there can be some difficulty at first to leave and let the reality in so we go into a state of shock, numbness, some call that denial, and that's oftentimes the, in the early phase of a loss and we're just grappling with, I think our, our human psyche is able to let it in in small pieces.

Dan Orfield ([12:45](#)):

And so that initial stage of going numb lets it come in very small increments over time, we begin to fall emotionally and that begins to come forward more and then we see more sadness. We have more feelings of anger or guilt. We don't like the fact that this loss has happened. We don't like that the restrictions we're facing due to social isolation right now. And so uh, as we walk through this, we don't want to say we see uh, necessarily stages of grief that are happening because stages would give us the sense of there being some sort of predictable roadmap about how we find our way through this.

Dan Orfield ([13:21](#)):

And uh, so by saying let's take notice of the cycles we go through, some of the extremes, some of the emotions and, and if we notice that, it may come and it go and then it searches again. I love the quote on the screen that says grief is like the ocean. It comes on waves, ebbing and flowing. Sometimes the water is calm and sometimes it's overwhelming. All we can do is learn to swim. So it's common for us to focus on the emotions that go with grief. It can also have a physical impact, actually feeling physical pain.

Dan Orfield ([13:55](#)):

We can have interruption to our sleep, our appetite, our desire to want to do anything pleasurable, for example. So uh, it's important it gets in the way of uh, knowing just how we think. Can we concentrate and focus at times? And so take a look at the handout attached to our presentation today that says grief reactions, our firsthand out. And this describes and normalizes some of the things we're talking about here today, just recognize which of those do you relate to, do you notice? Maybe they come at different times.

Dan Orfield ([14:25](#)):

And I like how it validates that we have emotions, behaviors, physical needs, and also our thinking process gets affected. And I would just encourage you to take that away as sort of a thing summary of our discussion here today. So I just want to say, give yourself time for the processing of grief to go through. There's no right way. There's no timeline. We don't just get over it. We may get that advice, get over it and maybe try to tell ourselves that.

Dan Orfield ([14:52](#)):

But it's important to know that it's gradual and it's going to eventually integrate its way into your life of walking through our grief and a rebuilding of redefining a new sort of normal as you begin to find your way. So give yourself some time and space. It's important to take away, that's why it's often painful and grieving is normal, it's a natural process. And so just to recognize um, this is what it means to be fully human.

Dan Orfield ([15:17](#)):

And it hurts in this moment here, but it's also a way that we can kind of sort out and find our, our, uh, our life and our joy again somewhere down the road. So coping after a death. Grief is especially powerful, especially if it's in the face of an actual death of someone that you know. This is going to affect you mentally, emotionally, physically, advise, as I've described. Um, we manage this immediately.

Dan Orfield ([15:43](#)):

And it's important too, you're going to break down the steps you take to try to respond in very small increments. So first of all, lower your expectations. This is not life as usual. This is not a normal season.

And so deciding what does it take to have a successful day or what are the uh, things that you think you ought to accomplish and reduce that. There's not a lot of should decisions that you have to make, you want to lower the bar.

Dan Orfield ([16:10](#)):

This is going to help avoid feeling guilty your self critical that you're not accomplishing enough or you should be doing better. The truth is, is you're not on your A game right now. We want to stay in the moment as much as we can. Your thoughts may be just spiraling, spinning out of control, trying to anticipate how will things go going forward, could be replaying past experiences that maybe are already a challenge to uh, not have resolved those yet.

Dan Orfield ([16:37](#)):

On top of that, you've just got the blast of emotions that are hitting you in the middle of a grief season. So you want to think in terms of how you get through your day and maybe it's you get through that day or just that hour or just five or 10 minutes, but to bring it down to a doable pace that you can say getting through it is going to build your journey and you're going to find your next steps.

Dan Orfield ([16:59](#)):

Again, small increments for your goals. A small step could be, is I'm going to get out of bed by a certain time, or just for a little while. Or I'm going to go take a moment to exercise for five or 10 minutes, a brief walk, uh, some sort of, uh, uh, activity that just causes you to be physically active even when you feel you don't have the energy or any interest to move a little bit is going to be something that will cause you to look at what you can do and give a little bit of energy where you don't actually have any at that time.

Dan Orfield ([17:31](#)):

And then finally lean on routines. This is uh, the structure that we rely on just to give us a sense of uh, a direction for how our day goes, some front, framework that we walk within as we do our daily routines. And it's especially true as we're doing the routines of grieving. So set some times up for when you're going to eat, when to sleep. If that's a nap or nighttime, I try to have good routines for going to sleep.

Dan Orfield ([17:57](#)):

Uh, regular phone check-ins could happen. Just set an appointment with someone to say at 2:00 in the afternoon, let's have a phone call and we'll check in for five minutes. And to just look toward that helps you keep connected to some sort of uh, regular steps you're taking. Maybe you journal a little bit as you uh, pour out your thoughts and just work through that. But just having some routine is the beginning of moving back to some sense of normal. It's going to bring you stronger.

Dan Orfield ([18:26](#)):

So over time, your expectations and your capabilities are gradually going to expand. It just means have a small beginning somewhere. So now we're talking about coping through grief and we see the words finding your way. So going forward here is going to be a unique path for you. Uh, professionals who work with grief uh, tell us that grieving, is there are some very valuable steps that you can take, so some specific concrete things.

Dan Orfield ([18:54](#)):

So first of all, name it. Just acknowledge the grief, recognize that this is grief. This is life is unusual. And therefore I'm just going to be aware it's working on me right now. It's natural that we would want to push down feelings, stuff them, try to stay away. Uh, quite often we may want to overwork or over drink or, or something that causes us to put that feeling away. But basically the feeling waits and it's there waiting for you uh, when you come back again.

Dan Orfield ([19:22](#)):

So you may find periods where you're easily tearful, that can release a lot of feeling. And then for other people, you're not tearful. Both are okay. So it's important to know that you are entitled to feel exactly how you do right now and to give yourself some space to let that feeling just be there. And then speak up, ask for what you need. Other people may come around you and they want to respond.

Dan Orfield ([19:49](#)):

They themselves are probably uncomfortable as they are wondering what to do or how to help and they may think they know what you need. So definitely think about, speak up and say what it is that might be helpful for. You know, we've noticed that, um, in some studies that men may uh, express grief through becoming more active, doing projects, tasks to help cope while we often see women who favor talking and connecting to other people. And so really there's different expressions but it's the same process.

Dan Orfield ([20:20](#)):

So what's helping you will be unique and let other people know what you need. And you may learn over time what you need and it may change. So keep letting the people near you know what you need and just be specific. It's going to help them to know how to help you, and they really want to know what to do. And then trust yourself. As you move through grief, you're going at your own pace.

Dan Orfield ([20:44](#)):

The truth about resolving grief, um, is not what you read or what someone tells you. No one's going to give you the answer. In reality, answers are mostly inside you. That comes out of your sense of your value, it's your life experiences, how you've gotten through hard things before this time, and simply to let yourself listen to how you're responding and, and to just let those uh, expressions, speak, come forward.

Dan Orfield ([21:10](#)):

Let that wisdom that you have, uh, built up inside come through. There's some days you're going to feel strong. Other days, it's all you can do is to put one foot in front of the other. Again, we think of grief coming in sort of waves and cycles that we cannot fully predict. And finally on this page, staying connected is okay. It's okay and healthy and reasonable that you maintain some sense of contact with a loved one that you've lost.

Dan Orfield ([21:37](#)):

So maybe you have a touchstone, some sort of a memento that you hold onto that was meaningful to you and to them and to them because you can feel a connection to them. Maybe in that time, you sit quietly by yourself and you just talk out loud as if you're having a conversation. Or you write a letter to as if you were saying that to them right there in person. And just to make the connection and to let that happen.

Dan Orfield ([22:00](#)):

It could also involve doing activities that were meaningful to you and the other person, or that somehow makes you feel close to them. And in all this, some of those activities or those uh, mementos may be too painful to have a look at. So maybe certain photos or mementos have to be put aside in a box for a little while and then brought out at a later time. So what matters most here is that uh, you want to build into your routine some rituals that give you a tool that is a sense of some connection that gives you a way to express the grief, gives you an outlet for grief.

Dan Orfield ([22:37](#)):

So let's talk about uh, why, why do rituals matter to us? So rituals give us a way to respond to our feelings. And what we're feeling is helplessness. We have a loss and we don't quite know where to begin or what to do about it. So it gives us a framework to start expressing things or expressing our thoughts, letting our feelings come through. And in this season with, um, social distancing, those guidelines can get in the way of the rituals that would normally give us a deep catharsis and let us put some expression on that.

Dan Orfield ([23:08](#)):

Maybe the formal rituals could be like a memorial service, a funeral, uh, a gathering together at a, at a graveside. And we can't do that just yet. And so we have to figure out a way because those have been postponed. So we need to find some other ways to honor the importance of the person you've lost and the needs that you're going through. So some ways we can do that. We can have faith rituals. Maybe you pray, that puts a sense of meaning and comfort on what's happening right where you're at.

Dan Orfield ([23:39](#)):

You could create a, a memory box that's bringing together certain mementos or photos or things that really relate to the significance of who this person has been to you. Maybe you uh, fill up your mantle or shelf, uh, or a window sill and you put up these specific mementos and pictures and light a candle there. And you can just have a visible place where you can go and actually visit your loved one and connecting to these significant expressions.

Dan Orfield ([24:07](#)):

You could also invite the sharing of stories. And stories are such an important part. As we, as humans just live off these narratives that did... We explain why things matter by telling what's happened. And telling our stories might come through an obituary, letting someone help write that, or as you write the story and tell that person's life story. Social media may have a thread where there's a discussion happening.

Dan Orfield ([24:31](#)):

People may come to you and ask, "What can I do?" And that's one key thing you could say to them is, "Could you just write down some stories about what this person meant and maybe the way they've affected your life in some way that was helpful or stories of things that happened." And you can gather those together in a scrapbook and to have those on hand, to go back and look at and to hold onto as tangible expressions that help you keep connected to what matters.

Dan Orfield ([24:55](#)):



And you may want to right away start planning a memorial service. It may, may be happening at a later date, but go ahead and work on the details now as if it was actually about to take place soon. That gives you a place to pour your focus. You can honor, uh, the, the person who has died by giving them some sort of attribute that would live on. You could plant a tree or a garden in their knowle, in their memory. Or you could have a scholarship fund that you set up.

Dan Orfield ([25:22](#)):

A lot of social media pages will have a specific cause that you can give to and people join you that way and they can give, and it gives them a practical expression to join what really matters. So there's no real rules about what should be done, but rituals are an important thing that give you a way to actively respond at a time where you feel helpless. And also, you know, we're seeing rituals that are springing up in response to the pandemic around us, where we see people that are gathering in their neighborhoods, in their driveways and they do a morning exercise routine.

Dan Orfield ([25:56](#)):

I've noticed on taking walks people are much, much more willing to actually greet me from several feet away as they're taking a walk. And so, uh, drive by birthday celebrations have been happening where people honk their horn outside of someone's house to say happy birthday. So we're connecting in lots of new ways. Maybe we do this for virtual meetings, but this helps take some of the edge off of the grief and that the isolation is not going to stop us from going ahead and doing this process.

Dan Orfield ([26:26](#)):

Let's talk about coping through grief. So it's just staying strong, staying supported is going to be helpful and you're going to be better whether uh, the stress and the exhaustion of grief is just going to try to take you down too far. So let's just think about some helpful ways. So the first one says, lean on others. You think of that iconic song Lean on Me. And it is with irony that Bill Withers who composed that song died just not many days ago, but it expresses this sentiment right here.

Dan Orfield ([26:56](#)):

People come by and they have this outpouring of support for you. Let other people help take care of, of you. You're helping them while they're helping you. And it's so important for both of you at that point. So think about supportive people who can come. You know, what we need probably more than anything is a listening ear. This is anyone that knows you, friends, family, your faith community.

Dan Orfield ([27:20](#)):

You might be speaking with a professional counselor or an online grief support group, but many people find having just some sort of regular communication. Like I said earlier, uh, a daily check-in a call with someone could, um, allow for that. But people will come to you so think about tasks they can do for you to uh, support and to help them find a way to give practical expression to that support.

Dan Orfield ([27:45](#)):

We want to express our thoughts and feelings. I talked about journaling. I think it's an amazing, powerful thing where the journal has the ability to be a heaviness that's on your heart and then it flows out onto the ink and stays on the page. And you're able to look at it. You can examine what it means. And part of that heaviness is now on the page instead of so much in your heart. So journaling can be very helpful just to clarify what's going on inside.

Dan Orfield ([28:10](#)):

Maybe you want to engage in some creativity activities. So if you paint, if you like to sing or do craft work, maybe you want to build something, uh, all of those are creative expressions, and that has a way of sort of evoking and letting your feelings uh, go down a path and be released and expressed. Sometimes that can even just be taking your focus off your grief for a while and just gives a deep sense of renewal inside to create something.

Dan Orfield ([28:38](#)):

And it's important to keep self care up in front. Self care can not be optional as you're walking through grief. Grieving is hard work. It draws upon your physical strength. And so it's important. Think about uh, good nutrition, eating a balanced diet, get some sleep rituals and routines in place, keep some physical activity. There's going to be times where it seems like those are impossible, but this is, has shown some proven help to really reduce the impact of the emotional stress.

Dan Orfield ([29:08](#)):

These are practical things you can engage in that help you figure out ways you're going to uh, walk through the grief process. Be mindful of any ways you could be trying to cope that could be unhealthy. And so I've mentioned uh, alcohol and drug use. And so if you turn to that, it actually could interfere with your natural energy your body gets. And a matter of fact, if we've been over consuming on drugs and alcohol, that could interrupt your sleep cycles where you don't get nice deep REM sleep. And so therefore, you wake up tired, you don't have energy for the next day, and you're more fatigued as a result.

Dan Orfield ([29:41](#)):

So think about that, that alcohol, it's a depressant. It doesn't lift your spirits. And so instead of finding someone to talk with, it's going to be a much healthier way of trying to cope. Be aware of how much attention you're giving to the news when it's a time to shut off a device and to stop looking at the screens and to stop listening to uh, alarming headlines, because that's going to only add to the stress that you're already tapped out with at that moment.

Dan Orfield ([30:09](#)):

Preserve your emotional resources for your own journey of grief. At least set some pace on how often you're going to tune into the news. So these have been some coping strategies. They don't remove the pain, but they may help you find some strength and give you some practical ways that you can manage and walk through it. Let's talk about what if you know someone who has experienced the loss of a loved one, a dear person, a friend, a neighbor, and you want to bring comfort to them. It's a real challenge and so in knowing what to do.

Dan Orfield ([30:41](#)):

The biggest thing people need is your availability and your presence. So let's look, look at some of those. As you connect with someone, follow their lead. We want to find out what's going on. We don't want to assume that you know what they need. You can't intuitively read their mind to know what they need. But at the same time, pay attention and try to understand what they're feeling. Just honestly respond to them. Just compassion, kindness, empathy, just let them know that you care.

Dan Orfield ([31:09](#)):

You don't have to give them answers or try to remove the pain, just be present. And when we're with someone, we want to avoid clichés. And so you can say something to the effect of well, he's in a better place now, or you need to be strong for her, that's what she would've wanted. You know, what those really do is they shut down the freedom for that person to go ahead and express what they really are feeling. So this is not going to be helpful.

Dan Orfield ([31:36](#)):

You know, what really helps is to say something more along the lines of, I don't know what to say, but I'm here or I don't know how you feel entirely. I can't imagine what you're going through, but I'm available and I want to help any way I can. That's more just uh, being authentic, being present. And you don't need to fix them, you just need to be with them. And then I love this expression, listen and keep listening.

Dan Orfield ([32:03](#)):

So listen, listen without judging, trying to force them through the process, trying to hurry up their grief experience. Just listen. You may hear the same story over and over. As my father processed uh, the death of my mother, I heard him just repeatedly tell the same story. Um, I mean, literally a dozen or two dozen times, the same story over the first few weeks. And it was important that he was simply putting words on the significance of what that loss was instead of the matter of the fact that he had just said that same story to me twice that same day.

Dan Orfield ([32:36](#)):

So uh, people are drawing comfort from knowing just that you're present, that you care. And then try to anticipate their needs. If someone's consumed by grief, they may not know how to ask for help. They may not know what they need. So you can try and put yourself in their shoes and maybe ask a few questions. Could I bring a meal over? Can I go mow the lawn for you? Maybe you have to help them organize their bills or have a look at their calendar and think about next steps and then get a bit of a plan, but to engage them and just to offer an idea in the form of a question, could I help with this?

Dan Orfield ([33:11](#)):

That's much more effective than simply saying, "If I could do anything to help," and leave it at that, they may not know how to focus that in. But if you give a suggestion or two, that may be very much more helpful. So what do we mean here on the slide when we say we want to go the distance? The key thought here is that grief is a long process. The support tends to fade away, people go on with their lives. They forget about being there for someone else. So be mindful if you know of key anniversaries or key things that would happen at certain times of the year.

Dan Orfield ([33:43](#)):

And for someone who's lost a loved one, a dear friend, for instance, the anniversary of the death or a birthday coming up or going through holidays for the first time without them, that can be especially hard. And so to keep connected to them and just check in how you're doing, just be mindful, be aware. The other handout we have available says I'm offering support after a death and it just gives pointers on how you can be a help to someone else who's grieving. Great takeaway, keep those ideas at hand to be thinking about in the days to come.

Dan Orfield ([34:16](#)):

So as we close, I just want to say we're walking through a process on various levels that we've had lots of losses, be good to yourself. The challenge of navigating our everyday losses here in the midst of this pandemic, they are deep. That requires a lot of profound emotional work on our part. Add to it, if there's a death involved, it's that much stronger. Um, grief reminds us that these losses matter. That's the key message when we think about grief.

Dan Orfield ([34:48](#)):

It just helps us highlight the significance of what that loss meant because the connection to that person was significant. And at the end of the day, nothing really matters as much and our human existence is how we are connected to key relationships. So as you do this, we want to remember as you grieve, be kind to yourself, give yourself some patience, uh, some time for getting through a day. You don't have to be on your best at that point. So be compassionate toward others, be compassionate toward yourself.

Dan Orfield ([35:19](#)):

Things will not necessarily go as you're planning. It's gonna take time. It's really important that you know that you're not alone. And so the whole world, our communities around us, we're living with grief and loss, but we can find our way forward and we need to do it one step at a time and we need to do it together. So I want to just encourage you to reach out if maybe professional support could be helpful if you're finding it's just too difficult to find your way through the, the grieving process.

Dan Orfield ([35:48](#)):

So you can work with a mental health professional, give you a chance to talk, maybe or the person in your faith community. And then find some coping strategies that are going to tune in to what do you need personally. And so in summary, just to wrap up, I want to say, um, we've examined quite a bit here today. I want to just to encourage you that nobody perfectly understands how you're experiencing losses right now, and it's taking a toll. We just need to be sure to give ourselves some time, give ourselves some space to have these experiences that we're walking through and do this journey, but don't do it alone. Journey together. And I would just want to encourage you today is uh, take care of yourself, be well, and thank you for joining us for this important conversation.

Speaker 1 ([36:36](#)):

Thank you, Dan. And ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for being with us today. That concludes today's webinar.