Holiday Stress
Managing Loss and Change in the Season of Joy

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Centre for Living with Dying
A Program of Bill Wilson Center
Loss and Change

- *Grief and stress: Our natural response to loss and change*
- *Acute, Delayed, Cumulative & Occupational Stress*
- *Emotional trauma equals physical injury*
- *We can do an action step*
Social Distancing = Physical Distancing

When I hug you, I hug me, I hug you.....
360 Grief

- Natural Disasters
- COVID-19 Pandemic
- Racial Equity & Justice
- Climate Change

- Entire life impacted
- Every area affected
- Acknowledge magnitude
- Share the experience
- Tend and befriend
Holidays

- Intensify good and painful memories of incidents we are surviving
- We gear up for the holidays
- We can prepare with actions to honor our loss and love
- We can include others in our ceremonies
- Isolation to community, OOC to control
What is the Centre?

- Provides support, intervention and education for the life issues of grief, loss, serious illness, trauma and change for community members, caregiving professionals and responders.
- Non profit program of Bill Wilson Center for Silicon Valley and surrounding areas.
- Group, individual, children, family and community support and intervention.
- For almost 45 years, over one and a half million people served.
Pandemic Fatigue

- Exhaustion: mind, body, soul
- More critical incidents in addition to pandemic
- Secondary trauma
- Erosion of resiliency
During the Holidays

- Permission to grieve in our American Society
- Men and Women: How are we taught to grieve
- Cultural traditions in grief, loss and change
- How do we acknowledge stress and grief in an affirming way in the season of joy?
What is Grief?

- Natural response to any loss or change
- A normal person having a normal reaction to an abnormal event
- Unpredictable waves of emotions and memory triggers
- Very individual and unique, and yet our universal human experience
- Grief and trauma know no time
PTSI and the Holidays

- Prolonged stress and grief
- Repeating and intrusive memory triggers
- Cascade effect
- Backpack dynamic
- Managing acute symptoms first
Grief and Loss

- Magnitude of loss
- Spiral of Reactions
- Sensory, Time and Memory Reminders
- Loss of Life meaning/purpose
- Heart Hotel
Reactions in the Aftermath of a Critical Incident

A critical incident is any event that causes unusually strong reactions in the responding personnel or survivors. These reactions can occur immediately or in a delayed fashion.

**Immediate**
0 to 24 hours
- Tunnel Vision
- Sensory Distortion
- Rapid Heartbeat
- Inability to Function
- Lowered Short-term Memory
- Shakiness
- Nausea
- Excitable
- Agitated
- Clammy
- Shock

**Long Term**
2 weeks to 6 months
- Hysterical
- Helpless
- Fearful
- Tired
- Dizzy
- Angry
- Hostile
- Forgetfulness
- Exhaustion
- Nightmares
- Substance Abuse
- Loneliness
- Isolation

**Anniversary Reaction**
6 months to 3 or more years
- Caregivers Delayed Response
- Alienation
- Memory Triggers
- Flashbacks
- Anxiety Response
- Suicidal Thoughts
- Change in Sexual Desire
- Relationship Difficulties
- Inability to Work
- Substance Abuse

**The Centre for Living with Dying**
A program of the Bill Wilson Center
(408) 243-0222

**Bay Area CISM Team**
Critical Incident Stress Management

These symptoms, feelings, reactions or events may occur at any time:
- Repeating Memories
- Stuck
- Surprise
- Phantoms
- withdrawal
- Out of Control
- Vulnerability
- Paralysis
- Dread
- Crazy
- Physical & Emotional Pain

Sensory, Memory, & Time Triggers
Heart Hotel
Family Dynamics

- Judge each other on behaviors vs. reactions/feelings
- Have specific roles
- Conflict because each person has a different reaction
- Focus on individual experience and needs
Adapted Maslow’s Needs Hierarchy

- Survival
- Safety
- Emotional Needs/ Relationships
- Building the New Normal
- Creating Meaning from the Trauma/ Life Transformation
Infinity of giving and receiving
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<tr>
<td>Acknowledgement</td>
<td>Advice</td>
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<td>Pity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Space</td>
<td>You should . . .</td>
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Support Tips

🌟 Stay in the present moment.
🌟 Normalize grief/stress response.
🌟 Focus on most difficult issue RIGHT NOW.
🌟 Assess what is needed RIGHT NOW.
🌟 No easy way over grief, but moment by moment, we get through grief and build the NEW NORMAL.
Triage the Holidays

- What is the thing you are most dreading this holiday season?
- What is the action step you can do?
- What tradition can you change or let go of this year?
- If it takes more energy than it gives you, let it go this year.
Tools for Survival

- Acknowledge
- Express
- Act
- Reconnect
Tools for Survival

ACKNOWLEDGE
EXPRESS
ACT
RECONNECT

Express Yourself
Daily Log

- My body – what does it say?
- What did I eat?
- Did I move?
- Any unfinished business?
- What did I do just for me?
- Dreams and day dreams
- Identify: what is the most powerful today and what do I need?
- Message for me in the day
Triage

- Breathe.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Move.
- Eat.
- Give yourself a break.
- Ground: Get in the present moment.
- Identify: what is the most difficult
- And what do I need to get through it right now.
Remember

✦ Be gentle with your own process.
✦ What you do does make a difference in people’s lives and their ability to survive the loss. *It is never too late to respond.*
✦ We have today. Savor what’s good in your life now.
✦ Do something fun and life affirming for yourself in the next 24 hours.