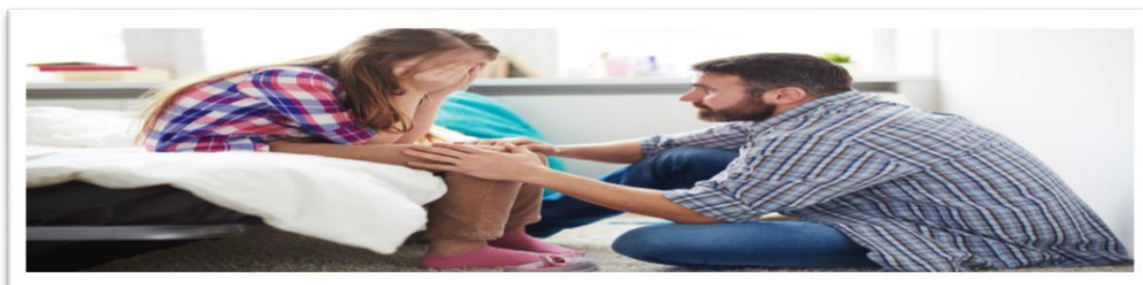


## Coping with Loss of Normalcy and Cancellation of Events

1. Children and young people are having to adapt to coping with the loss of their daily routine and cancellation of much anticipated events. Year 6 children will not have their last day at primary school and year 11 children will miss out on taking their GCSE's and celebrating with prom. College students will not have the opportunity to take their A levels and may feel their whole future is uncertain. This can all bring about extreme emotions and the feelings of grief.
2. It is important that children and young people are allowed the freedom to express their disappointments or anger. Deliver the news in a factual way but acknowledge their emotions, help them explore their feelings and validate them so they know it is 'OK' to feel this way (e.g., *"I know how sad you are about this. You miss being with your friends, it's a big loss not to have that"*). Comments such as *"But honey, we're so lucky that we're not sick and you'll get to see your friends soon!"* are less helpful. Do not make false promises or reschedule with uncertainty but find a way to modify the missed event so it can be done creatively at home. Let them know you can't solve the problem for them. Be a listening ear so your child can freely vent their frustration. Don't try to wipe out the disappointment but if they are really catastrophising, for example, worrying that they won't go to university and won't get a job, this should be corrected.



3. It is helpful to understand the 5 stages of grief. The 5 stages do not always happen in a linear order:
  1. **Denial:** This virus won't affect me
  2. **Anger:** You're making me stay home and taking away my activities.
  3. **Bargaining:** Okay, if I social distance for two weeks things will be better
  4. **Sadness:** I don't know when this will end
  5. **Acceptance:** This is happening; I have to figure out how to proceed. I can wash my hands, I can keep a safe distance from others, I can learn how to work virtually. Acceptance is where the power lies as one can feel more in control. It is important to focus on what can be controlled. Help channel their anxiety to productivity (e.g., hand washing, social distancing, altruistic behaviours, staying home and making new hobbies) rather than unproductive (e.g spending all day clicking on the latest coronavirus headlines).

## References

- That Discomfort You're Feeling is Grief – Scott Berinato (Harvard Business Review)  
<https://hbr.org/2020/03/that-discomfort-youre-feeling-is-grief> - This article discusses the implications of collective grief, how it is taking a toll on all of us and what we can do to help manage our grief as a community.
- Handling Your Kid's Disappointment When Everything Is Cancelled – Erinne Magee (The New York Times)  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/18/parenting/coronavirus-kids-events-cancelled.html> - This article discusses how parents can help their children stay positive during this difficult time.
- Grieving the Losses of Coronavirus - Lori Gottlieb  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/23/well/family/coronavirus-grief-loss.html> - Mental health professionals discuss the implications of experiencing great losses (i.e. losing a loved one) and smaller losses (i.e. postponed weddings/vacations) and outline three steps in helping people cope with all types of loss.
- The Five Stages of Grief & Loss – Julie Axelrod  
<https://psychcentral.com/lib/the-5-stages-of-loss-and-grief/> - This article discusses 5 stages of grief and loss and explains how and why people do not experience them in the same way or in the same order.