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### **PARENTING TIPS DURING COVID-19**

1. "Put your own mask on first"
2. Understanding anxiety as a power surge
3. Remember feelings become thoughts; thoughts lead to actions
4. Do not always trust your feelings; because it feels right does not mean it is
5. Move to "he is having a hard time" from "he is giving me a hard time"
6. Be curious, not furious! Don't personalize the other's behavior!
7. Self-compassion: "How would I respond to a friend who is reacting to the same thing in the same way I am?"
8. Select the right time and right place for an important discussion.
9. Have important meetings in the mornings, never at night: "Walk and Talk"
10. Focus on what is working well before you focus on an area for growth
  
11. First seek to understand, then to be understood
12. Be sensitive to the other's "buttons" and areas of vulnerabilities
13. Use "I" statements and avoid accusatory "you" statements
14. Give the other person a way out; never paint them into a corner
15. Be angry "for" not angry "at"
16. Remember the message sent is not always the message received
17. Watch your tone of voice: Go "slow and low" for best results!
18. Stay in your own lane! Keep your side of the street clean!
19. Remember that expectations are premeditated resentments
20. Move from "should" to "could"
  
21. Will I let this "tutor me" or "torture me?"
22. With children, structure and be predictable as much as possible
23. Routines and rituals sooth us; family prayer and personal prayer
24. "Power showers" and "dress for success"
25. "Good enough" is excellent
26. Progress not perfection, these are tough times
27. We are all under new rules and regulations
28. Limit exposure to News, especially after dark.
29. Laughter is the best medicine
  
30. Factor in failure with children
31. "That which gets measured, gets managed"
32. "Worry time" - Pick a time for 15 minutes... Create a worry list for worry time for the full 15 minutes. Postpone the worry until then.

33. Kids take their cues from you, if you are sad about their missed birthday, they may feel worse.
34. Be honest, don't lie... People will get sick...
35. Always emphasize safety when talking to kids
36. Validate children's feelings: "You feel sad and mommy feels sad too, but we will be fine." "I feel sad, but this is what I am doing."
37. Model skills and don't lean on your kids for support.
38. Put yourself in a time out... "Kids, dad is putting himself in a time out."
39. When thoughts are bogus, just refocus.
  
40. "It is important to me that you..."
41. Build what is strong before fixing what is wrong!
42. Art and education projects raise esteem
43. "That which I focus on expands"
44. Practice "Grounding" and "4-6 or 5-5-5 breathing"
45. Focus on effort not the outcome.
46. Give lots of "A"s... Rewarded behavior is always repeated.
47. When in doubt, serve...
48. Prayer lists and acts of service
49. The 6 words "I can't, God can, Let God."
50. Prayer of St. Francis

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### **Definitions**

- Grief is the normal process of reacting to the loss
- Bereavement is the period after a loss during which grief is experienced and mourning occurs
- Mourning is the process by which people adapt to a loss

### **Anticipatory Grief**

- Anticipatory grief is the mourning that occurs when a person is expecting a death
- Anticipatory grief includes depression, extreme concern for the dying person, preparing for the death, and adjusting to changes caused by the death

### **Stages of Grief (Elizabeth Kubler-Ross)**

- Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, Acceptance

### **Phases of Grief (C.M. Parkes)**

- Shock and numbness
- Yearning and searching
- Disorganization and despair
- Reorganization

### **Four Tasks of Mourning (William Worden)**

- **Task One:** To accept the reality of the loss.  
It is to come to the belief that reunion, in this life, is impossible.
- **Task Two:** To work through to the pain of grief.  
Accepting and experiencing the pain-grief hurts!
- **Task Three:** To adjust to an environment without the person and develop meaningful ways to remember them. May need to develop new coping skills..
- **Task Four:** Reinvest energy in life. Investing in new attachments-loving again.

### **Meaning Reconstruction (Robert A. Neimeyer)**

*Grieving is a process of reconstructing a world of meaning that has been impacted by loss.*

- **Sense-Making:** Trying to understand and make sense of the loss.
- **Benefit-Finding:** What gains result from this loss?
- **Identity Reconstruction:** Who am I now

# GOOD GRIEF

Sadness and grief are natural reactions to changes in familiar habits due to death, divorce, moving, graduation, retirement, illness, and even vacations. All of these involve loss that can be painful for two reasons:

- They bring up core beliefs about the nature of existence—"I'm alone." "I'm responsible." "I'm lost." "I have no purpose." "I'm incomplete." "I'm vulnerable."
- They make us face "unfinished business" from a situation or relationship: resentments, regrets, unspoken appreciation, and unmet expectations.

It is not time or keeping busy that heals the painful wounds of loss, but creating a new definition of yourself and completing what was not finished in the relationship.

## COMPLETE UNFINISHED BUSINESS<sup>1</sup>

No matter how good a relationship or a situation is, it is a work in progress and therefore incomplete. As soon as you experience a loss, your mind reviews and searches for what was never communicated. This review continues intermittently until it is completed. The following show how you can help the process by communicating your regrets, resentments, unspoken appreciation, and unmet dreams to a mental image of the person who is gone, in a letter that you may never send, or to the eyes of a friend in role play.

### Make Amends

- Pinpoint your mistakes: Take responsibility for your contribution to any problems in the relationship, but only for your part! There are usually some positive consequences from even the worst blunders.
- Express your regret: "I am sorry for . . ."
- Express the (unrealistic) wish behind regrets: "I wish I had (could have) . . ." Identify a specific action that could have made the situation different.
- Change your pattern: In future situations, act out any realistic wishes you identified. Even if you are unable to do this with the person who is gone, you still make amends by being different with others.
- Do not ask for forgiveness: Forgiveness is entirely the choice of the "injured" party. If the other person is deceased, you can imagine how they would respond to you.

### Let Go of Resentments

- Identify any power you gave up or lost: Resentment comes from a loss of power.
- Identify the power or choices you now have: As you grow, you gain options. It may be difficult to let go of resentment until you know you can fulfill past unmet needs.
- Express your past resentment and newfound power as a statement: "I resented you for . . . but now I can (plan to) . . ."
- Do not tell people you forgive them. Often, this is perceived as an attack. Instead, let them know when you are doing OK. This releases both you and them. It is your responsibility to recover from any of your past hurts.

## Express Unspoken Gratitude, Dreams, and Future Plans

- “I want you to know. . . .”

## AFFIRM BELIEFS THAT REDEFINE YOURSELF

All relationships and situations develop their own set patterns and routines. When you become disconnected from these, it is natural to feel as though you are in free fall. Unless you are an expert “sky diver,” such experiences will trigger your most painful beliefs. To discover them, take a mental snapshot of the worst part of the ending of the relationship. As you look at that memory or mental image of the person who is gone, ask yourself:

- “What does this mean about me?”
- “How does this make me feel about myself?”
- “When did I first have this disturbing thought about myself?”

<b>Directions:</b> Mark any hurtful thoughts that are linked to your current or past losses. Then mark any healing beliefs that you would like to have to help you negotiate this difficult time in your life.		
<b>Change Hurtful Thoughts into</b>	. . .	<b>Healing Beliefs</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> I’m alone or abandoned. I don’t belong.		<input type="checkbox"/> I can find others to love and care for (me).
<input type="checkbox"/> I’ll never love (be loved) again.		<input type="checkbox"/> If I’ve loved (been loved) once, I will be again.
<input type="checkbox"/> There is only one right person for me.		<input type="checkbox"/> I can love more than one person in a lifetime.
<input type="checkbox"/> I cannot trust again.		<input type="checkbox"/> As I grow, I can become more discerning.
<input type="checkbox"/> I should have been there when he died.		<input type="checkbox"/> The sun rises and people die without my help.
<input type="checkbox"/> I’m responsible. I didn’t do enough.		<input type="checkbox"/> I did my best or enough.
<input type="checkbox"/> I’m unlovable or defective.		<input type="checkbox"/> I’m lovable or good enough.
<input type="checkbox"/> I’m lost. I have no purpose.		<input type="checkbox"/> I can find new joy and meaning in life.
<input type="checkbox"/> I’m empty or incomplete.		<input type="checkbox"/> I am complete and can go on.
<input type="checkbox"/> I’m vulnerable. I can’t handle this		<input type="checkbox"/> I can learn or find strength from this.
<input type="checkbox"/> I can’t take care of myself or go on.		<input type="checkbox"/> I can (learn to) take care of myself and go on.

## POINTERS FOR TURNING LOSSES INTO GAINS

Identifying new ideas, affirming them regularly, and using some of the following pointers will give you the compass you need to land on your feet on solid ground:

- Do not bury your feelings in food, alcohol, anger, TV, or work.
- Do not be strong for others. It may help them to see your pain.
- Be with your sadness when it comes. Accept it, but don’t invite it.
- Use emotional moments to mentally communicate unspoken words to your loved one or affirm beliefs that heal. This may intensify feelings and help release them.
- Stay with the pain of a negative memory but purposely follow it with a good one.
- Find a support group or person with whom you can share feelings.<sup>2</sup>
- Dispose of belongings gradually. Periodically review items you can release.
- Plan activities for anniversaries that are enjoyable and comforting or use “special days” \\\\\\\to mentally communicate how your “heart” plans to go on.
- Do not force yourself to feel pain that’s not there. It is okay to enjoy life after loss.

<sup>1</sup> From *The Grief Recovery Handbook* by Joan James and Russell Friedman (Harper Perennial, 2012)

# Safe Coping Skills (Part 1)

1. **Ask for help** - Reach out to someone safe
2. **Inspire yourself** – Carry something positive with you.
3. **Leave a bad scene** – When things go wrong, get out
4. **Persist** – Never, never, never, never, never, never, never, never, never give up
5. **Honesty** – Secrets and lying are at the core of PTSD and substance abuse; honesty heals them
6. **Cry** – Let yourself cry; it will not last forever
7. **Choose self-respect** – Choose whatever will make you like yourself tomorrow
8. **Take good care of your body** – Eat right, exercise, sleep
9. **List your options** – In any situation, you have choices
10. **Create meaning** – Remind yourself what you are living for: your children? Love? Truth? Justice? God?
11. **Do the best you can with what you have** – Make the most of available opportunities
12. **Set a boundary** – Say “no” to protect yourself
13. **Compassion** – Listen to yourself with respect and care
14. **When in doubt, do what’s hardest** - The most difficult path is invariably the right one
15. **Talk yourself through it** – Self-talk helps in difficult times
16. **Imagine** – Create a mental picture that helps you feel different (e.g., remember a safe place)
17. **Notice the choice point** – In slow motion, notice the exact moment when you chose a substance
18. **Pace yourself** – If overwhelmed, go slower; if stagnant, go faster
19. **Stay safe** – Do whatever you need to do to put your safety above all
20. **Seek understanding, not blame** – Listen to your behavior; blaming prevents growth
21. **If one way doesn’t work, try another** – As if in a maze, turn a corner and try a new path
22. **Link trauma and unhealthy coping** – Recognize substances/actions as an attempt to self-medicate
23. **Notice what you can control** – List the aspects of your life you do control (e.g., job, friends...)
24. **Create a new story** – You are the author of your life: be the hero who overcomes adversity
25. **Avoid avoid-able suffering** – Prevent bad situations in advance
26. **Ask others** – Ask others if your belief is accurate
27. **Get organized** – You’ll feel more in control with lists, “to do’s”, and a clean house
28. **Watch for danger signs** – Face a problem before it becomes huge; notice red flags
29. **Healing above all** – Focus on what matters
30. **Try something, anything** – A good plan today is better than a perfect one tomorrow
31. **Discovery** – Find out whether your assumption is true rather than staying “in your head”
32. **Attend treatment** – AA, self-help, therapy, medications, groups – anything that keeps you going
33. **Create a buffer** – Put something between you and danger (e.g., time, distance)
34. **Say what you really think** – You’ll feel closer to others (but only do this with safe people)
35. **Listen to your needs** – No more neglect – really hear what you need
36. **Move toward your opposite** – E.g., if you are too dependent, try being more independent
37. **Replay the scene** – Review a negative event: what can you do differently next time?
38. **Notice the cost** – What is the price of substance abuse in your life?
39. **Structure your day** – A productive schedule keeps you on track and connected to the world
40. **Set an action plan** – Be specific, set a deadline, and let others know about it
41. **Protect yourself** – Put up a shield against destructive people, bad environments, and substances
42. **Soothing talk** – Talk to yourself very gently (as if to a friend or a small child)

# Safe Coping Skills (Part 2)

**43. Think of the consequences** – Really see the impact for tomorrow, next week, next year    **44. Trust the process** – Just keep moving forward; the only way out is through    **45. Work the material** – The more you practice and participate, the quicker the healing    **46. Integrate the split self** – Accept all sides of yourself; they are there for a reason    **47. Expect growth to feel uncomfortable** – If it feels awkward or difficult you're doing it right    **48. Replace destructive activities** – Eat candy instead of getting high    **49. Pretend you like yourself** – See how different the day feels    **50. Focus on now** – Do what you can to make today better; don't get overwhelmed by the past or future    **51. Praise yourself** – Notice what you did right; this is the most powerful method of growth    **52. Observe repeating patterns** – try to notice and understand your re-enactments

**53. Self-nurture** – Do something that you enjoy (e.g., take a walk, see a movie)    **54. Practice delay** – If you can't totally prevent a self-destructive act, at least delay it as long as possible    **55. Let go of destructive relationships** – If it can't be fixed, detach    **56. Take responsibility** – Take an active, not a passive approach

**57. Set a deadline** – Make it happen by setting a date    **58. Make a commitment** – Promise yourself to do what's right to help your recovery    **59. Rethink** – Think in a way that helps you feel better    **60. Detach from emotional pain (grounding)** – Distract, walk away, change the channel    **61. Learn from experience** – Seek wisdom that can help you next time    **62. Solve the problem** – Don't take it personally when things go wrong – try to just seek a solution    **63. Use kinder language** – Make your language less harsh    **64. Examine the evidence** – Evaluate both sides of the picture    **65. Plan it out** – Take the time to think ahead-it's the opposite of impulsivity    **66. Identify the belief** – For example, should deprivation reasoning    **67. Reward yourself** – Find a healthy way to celebrate anything you do right    **68. Create new "tapes"** – Literally! Take a tape recorder and record a new way of thinking to play back    **69. Find rules to live by** – Remember a phrase that works for you (e.g., "Stay real")    **70. Setbacks are not failure** – A setback is just a setback, nothing more    **71. Tolerate the feeling** – "No feeling is final", just get through it safely    **72. Actions first and feelings will follow** – Don't wait until you feel motivated; just start now    **73. Create positive addictions** – Sports, hobbies, AA...    **74. When in doubt, don't** – If you suspect danger, stay away    **75. Fight the trigger** – Take an active approach to protect yourself    **76. Notice the source** – Before you accept criticism or advice, notice who's telling it to you

**77. Make a decision** – If you're stuck, try choosing the best solution you can right now; don't wait    **78. Do the right thing** – Do what you know will help you, even if you don't feel like it    **79. Go to a meeting** – Feet first; just get there and let the rest happen    **80. Remember the "I" in "illness" stands for isolation.**    **81. Prioritize healing** – Make healing your most urgent and important goal, above all else    **82. Reach for the community resources** – Lean on them! They can be a source of great support    **83. Get others to support you** – Tell people what you need

## WHAT IS GROUNDING?

Grounding is a set of simple strategies to *detach from emotional pain* (for example, drug cravings, self-harm impulses, anxiety, anger, sadness). Distraction works by **focusing outward on the external world**—rather than inward toward the self. You can also think of it as “distraction, “centering”, “a safe place,” “looking outward”, or “healthy detachment.”

## WHY DO GROUNDING?

When you are overwhelmed with emotional pain, you need a way to detach so that you gain control over your feelings and stay safe. As long as you are grounding, you cannot possibly use substances or hurt yourself! Grounding “anchors” you to the present and to reality.

Many people with PTSD and substance abuse struggle with either feeling too much (overwhelming emotions and memories) or too little (numbing and dissociation). In grounding, you attain balance between the two—conscious of reality and able to tolerate it.

### Guidelines

- ◆ Grounding can be done any time, any place, anywhere and no one has to know.
- ◆ Use grounding when you are: faced with a trigger, having a flashback, dissociating, having a substance craving, or when your emotional pain goes above 6 (on a 0-10 scale). Grounding puts healthy distance between you and these negative feelings.
- ◆ Keeping your eyes open, scan the room, and turn the light on to stay in touch with the present.
- ◆ Rate your mood before and after to test whether it worked. Before grounding, rate your level of emotional pain (0-10, where 10 means “extreme pain”). Then re-rate it afterwards. Has it gone down?
- ◆ No talking about negative feelings or journal writing. You want to distract away from negative feelings, not get in touch with them.
- ◆ Stay neutral-- no judgments of “good” and “bad”. For example, “The walls are blue; I dislike blue because it reminds me of depression.” Simply say, “The walls are blue” and move on.
- ◆ Focus on the present, not the past or future.
- ◆ Note that grounding is not the same as relaxation training. Grounding is much more active, focuses on distraction strategies, and is intended to help extreme negative feelings. It is believed to be more effective for PTSD than relaxation training.

## WAYS TO GROUND

### Mental Grounding

- ☞ Describe your environment in detail using all your senses. For example, “The walls are white, there are five pink chairs, there is a wooden bookshelf against the wall...” Describe objects, sounds, textures, colors, smells, shapes, numbers, and temperature. You can do this anywhere. For example, on the subway: “I’m on the subway. I’ll see the river soon. Those are the windows. This is the bench. The metal bar is silver. The subway map has four colors...”
- ☞ Play a “categories” game with yourself. Try to think of “types of dogs”, “jazz musicians”, “states that begin with ‘A’”, “cars”, “writers”, “sports”, “songs”, “European cities.”
- ☞ Do an age progression. If you have regressed to a younger age (e.g., 8 years old), you can slowly work your way back up (e.g., “I’m now 9”; “I’m now 10”; “I’m now 11”...) until you are back to your current age.
- ☞ Describe an everyday activity in great detail. For example, describe a meal that you cook (e.g., “First I peel the potatoes and cut them in quarters, then I boil the water, I make an herb marinade of oregano, basil, garlic, and olive oil...”).
- ☞ Imagine. Use an image: *Glide along on skates away from your pain; change the TV channel to get to a better show; think of a wall as a buffer between you and your pain.*
- ☞ Say a safety statement. “My name is \_\_\_\_\_; I am safe right now. I am in the present, not the past. I am located in \_\_\_\_\_; the date is \_\_\_\_\_.”
- ☞ Read something, saying each word to yourself. Or read each letter backwards so that you focus on the letters and not on the meaning of words.
- ☞ Use humor. Think of something funny to jolt yourself out of your mood.
- ☞ Count to 10 or say the alphabet, very s..l..o..w..l..y.
- ☞ Repeat a favorite saying to yourself over and over (e.g., the Serenity Prayer).

### **Physical Grounding**

- Run cool or warm water over your hands.
- Grab tightly onto your chair as hard as you can.
- Touch various objects around you: a pen, keys, your clothing, the table, the walls. Notice textures, colors, materials, weight, temperature. Compare objects you touch: Is one colder? Lighter?
- Dig your heels into the floor – literally “grounding” them! Notice the tension centered in your heels as you do this. Remind yourself that you are connected to the ground.
- Carry a *grounding object* in your pocket – a small object (a small rock, clay ring, piece of cloth, or yarn) that you can touch whenever you feel triggered.
- Jump up and down.
- Notice your body: The weight of your body in the chair; wiggling your toes in your socks; the feel of your back against the chair. You are connected to the world.
- Stretch. Extend your fingers, arms, or legs as far as you can; roll your head around.
- Walk slowly, noticing each footstep, saying “left”, “right” with each step.
- Eat something, describing the flavors in detail to yourself.
- Focus on your breathing, noticing each inhale and exhale. Repeat a pleasant word to yourself on each inhale (for example, a favorite color or a soothing word such as “safe”, or “easy”).

### **Soothing Grounding**

- ❖ Say kind statements, as if you were talking to a small child. E.g., “You are a good person going through a hard time. You’ll get through this.”
- ❖ Think of favorites. Think of your favorite color, animal, season, food, time of day, TV show.
- ❖ Picture people you care about (e.g., your children; and look at photographs of them).
- ❖ Remember the words to an inspiring song, quotation, or poem that makes you feel better (e.g., the Serenity Prayer)
- ❖ Remember a safe place. Describe a place that you find very soothing (perhaps the beach or mountains, or a favorite room); focus on everything about that place—the sounds, colors, shapes, objects, textures.
- ❖ Say a coping statement. “I can handle this”, “This feeling will pass.”
- ❖ Plan out a safe treat for yourself, such as a piece of candy, a nice dinner, or a warm bath.
- ❖ Think of things you are looking forward to in the next week, perhaps time with a friend or going to a movie.

### **WHAT IF GROUNDING DOES NOT WORK?**

- Practice as often as possible, even when you don’t “need” it, so that you’ll know it by heart.
- Practice faster. Speeding up the pace gets you focused on the outside world quickly.
- Try grounding for a loooooonnnnnngggg time (20-30 minutes). And, repeat repeat, repeat.
- Try to notice whether you do better with “physical” or “mental” grounding.
- Create your own methods of grounding. Any method you make up may be worth much more than those you read here because it is *yours*.
- Start grounding early in a negative mood cycle. Start when the substance craving just starts or when you have just started having a flashback.