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**FOR** **IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**We’re All Grieving: How Do We Cope?**
**Sunbeam Family Services Shares Tips for Coping with Grief During COVID-19**

**(OKLAHOMA CITY)** – COVID-19 has globally impacted communities in a big way. From what we are reading and hearing from colleagues in the field, our staff wanted to share some thoughts regarding this experience. We know it has left many people anxious about life and death issues. We are all wrestling with a multitude of both obvious and subtle changes to our daily patterns. It’s normal to feel powerless right now, and many people have a sense of shock, numbness, anger, disappointment, blame and fear. All of these emotions are part of grief.

We are grieving.

· The loss of felt safety.

· The loss of routine.

· The loss of the familiar.

· The loss of predictability.

· The loss of social proximity.

· The loss of easy access to supplies.

· The loss of freedom to come and go as you please.

· The loss of time with extended family and dear friends.

Through all of this, we are all stretching and growing new muscles – like juggling multiple Zoom calls from home while trying to teach 4th grade math. The essence of who we are has not changed, but the platform of how we do our work certainly has. This adds to the heaviness of it all, as many of us do not have access to the environments we are used to.

What we are all doing each day to manage our own stress while meeting the needs of our work and family is no small feat. If this experience feels hard, it’s because it is hard.

Grief is not linear, but rather comes in waves. According to [Harvard Business Review](https://hbr.org/2020/03/that-discomfort-youre-feeling-is-grief)'s recent interview with David Kessler, even grief over the pandemic has stages: “There’s denial: This virus won’t affect us. There’s anger: You’re making me stay home and taking away my activities. There’s bargaining: Okay, if I social distance for two weeks everything will be better, right? There’s sadness: I don’t know when this will end. And finally, there’s acceptance. This is happening; I have to figure out how to proceed.”

Grief is not a problem to be solved and the only way to get past grief is to actively work through it. Here are some tips from [mindbodygreen.com](http://www.mindbodygreen.com/) to help you in this process:

**1. Choose to feel.**
**Loss is a rich soup of emotions, sensations, urges, and memories. Make room for them all. Research shows that people who respond to loss with tears and laughter; mourning and honoring; missing and appreciating, are more likely to recover and even prosper. Post-traumatic growth is real. If you want that for yourself, start by opening the door to your own reactions to the loss.**

**2. Notice your thoughts, but choose which thoughts to follow.**
**Bring your wiser self into the room, and watch your mind try to deny, blame others, withdraw, or force a silver lining. Every mental move from every developmental era will be attempted when there is a major loss. These thoughts may encourage you to reach out to others, change in ways you know are healthy, or give yourself (and others) a moment of kindness.**

**3. Attend to what is important here and now.**
**As you begin to take in the loss, direct your attention to what's actually important in the present moment. Let go of worry and instead broaden your focus. You are here. You are alive. This moment contains life in full measure.**

**4. Connect in consciousness with others.**
**Don't bow your head and close your eyes inside a loss, as if hiding away will make it better. Metaphorically, and quite physically, lift your head up, open your eyes, and connect with others. Yes, you can do this even while coping with loss, and even while physically distancing. FaceTime a friend or a family member. Remember, we are all in this together.**

**5. Choose your best self.**
**Think of a person who might give you guidance on how to be your best self amid a loss. If you could pick anyone, who would it be? Don't do this in a purely logical way—let your soul speak to you, then choose. Once you've chosen, think about how that person carries themselves in life. My guess, you picked someone who displays values you admire. If you were to put those values into your heart, what might you do to deal with this loss differently? A letter of gratitude? A phone call to a loved one? Help others deal with similar losses?**

**6. Go for it.**
**Your heart just gave you a "values road map," and now it's time to put it into action. Values are like traction, meaning they grip the surface beneath you so that you can step forward. The mind may want you to remove the traction, but research shows that "dis-traction" only amplifies loss in an unhealthy way. The flip side of loss is love and care. Taking action, rather than disengaging, will help you deal with loss in a much healthier way. Write that letter, make that call, or reach out to help others deal with similar losses. Whatever the destination your heart mapped out for you, go for it.**

Sunbeam is currently accepting new counseling clients. The nonprofit offers telehealth counseling and mental health services. Through this service, Oklahomans can receive mental health support through video counseling sessions from the comfort of their own homes. Sunbeam also provides sliding-scale counseling services, which can reduce the cost of mental health sessions.

For more information about mental health services visit sunbeamfamilyservices.org/counseling or call (405) 528-7721.

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About Sunbeam Family Services

Founded in 1907, Sunbeam Family Services is one of Oklahoma’s longest serving nonprofits and is one of the original United Way of Central Oklahoma Community partners. Sunbeam’s mission is to provide help, hope and the opportunity to succeed through Early Childhood, Counseling, Foster Care and Senior Services. To learn more, call 405-528-7721, visit sunbeamfamilyservices.org, or join the conversation on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

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