

Reflection #17  
By Eugene Dufour

### **Coping with the Fear of COVID 19 Infection How Do I Grieve In Isolation?**

*"It's not what happens to you that is important, it's how you choose to respond that really matters." Dr. Victor Frankl*

Working with grief in isolation will be very difficult. This goes against all that is important in processing grief. It was so helpful to be able to hug and physically cry with my family during and after my Dad's death a few years ago. It is important to remember that grief is not an event... it is a process and it is a long process. But the crisis of this pandemic brings our attention about the event of the death. We can not let this pandemic rob us of "walking with grief". It is necessary to spend time reflecting on the event of the death and all the complicated factors. However, it is crucial that we become very **intentional** on working with the process of grief especially during these times of isolation and physical distancing. Here are a few suggestions:

1. If possible, find a shirt or sweater of your loved one that has died. Wrap the item around a pillow and hold or hug that pillow as you sit with your grief. It is not the real thing, but it is a substitute for your loved one and a temporary substitute your supportive family and friends.
2. Change your environment. Doing grief work in the comfort of your recliner is good. Allow yourself to do some grief work outside – nature is healing.
3. Plan for support. This is very important in a time of physical distancing.
  - Make several phone appointments at one time with your support people.
  - Search out to "Virtual Support Groups". Contact your local hospice.
4. Tell your story of the death of your loved one over and over.....this is healing.
5. Create a "Place of Grief Reflection" in your home. Have a few pictures, a candle, and some important reminders of your loved one. This can be your own funeral home visitation time.
6. Journal writing can be very healthy and healing. Start out with writing: "Today I am feeling..." And let the words flow.
7. The pandemic is forcing us to physically isolate. We can not let the pandemic shut down our grief. We need to become very intentional and practical in allowing our unique grief work to happen.
8. Create rituals where rituals have been taken away. Planning for the memorial service that will replace the funeral can be a part of your grief work. Try not to delay this important task.
9. There is no right way or wrong way to grieve – just your way.
10. Know and feel that you have a loving village supporting at a distance – but not for long.