

# COVID-19 through the Lens of Grief

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William Wendt:  
“No one should  
have to grieve  
alone.”

# “Defining” Grief

The experience of and reaction to any loss - not just due to death. Grief is always a multi-faceted, time-varying response that contains physical, cognitive, behavioral, social, spiritual, and philosophical components. These components are often experienced in “waves” across the grief process.

# Life Before COVID-19

- Grieving what you thought your child's life would look like
- Grieving what you thought your life as a parent, spouse, family member, friend, or employee would look like
- Significant and never-ending caregiving responsibilities
- Fears about health, safety, survival
- Separation from societal norms and relationships
- Feeling hopelessly isolated

# Life During COVID-19

- Grieving **the loss of your hard-won lifestyle adaptations and supports**
- **Even more** significant caregiving responsibilities with reduced access to support
- **Increased** fears about health, safety, and survival
- **Heightened** sense of isolation due to physical distancing precautions

# Naming the Grief

Traumatic

Anticipatory

Disenfranchised





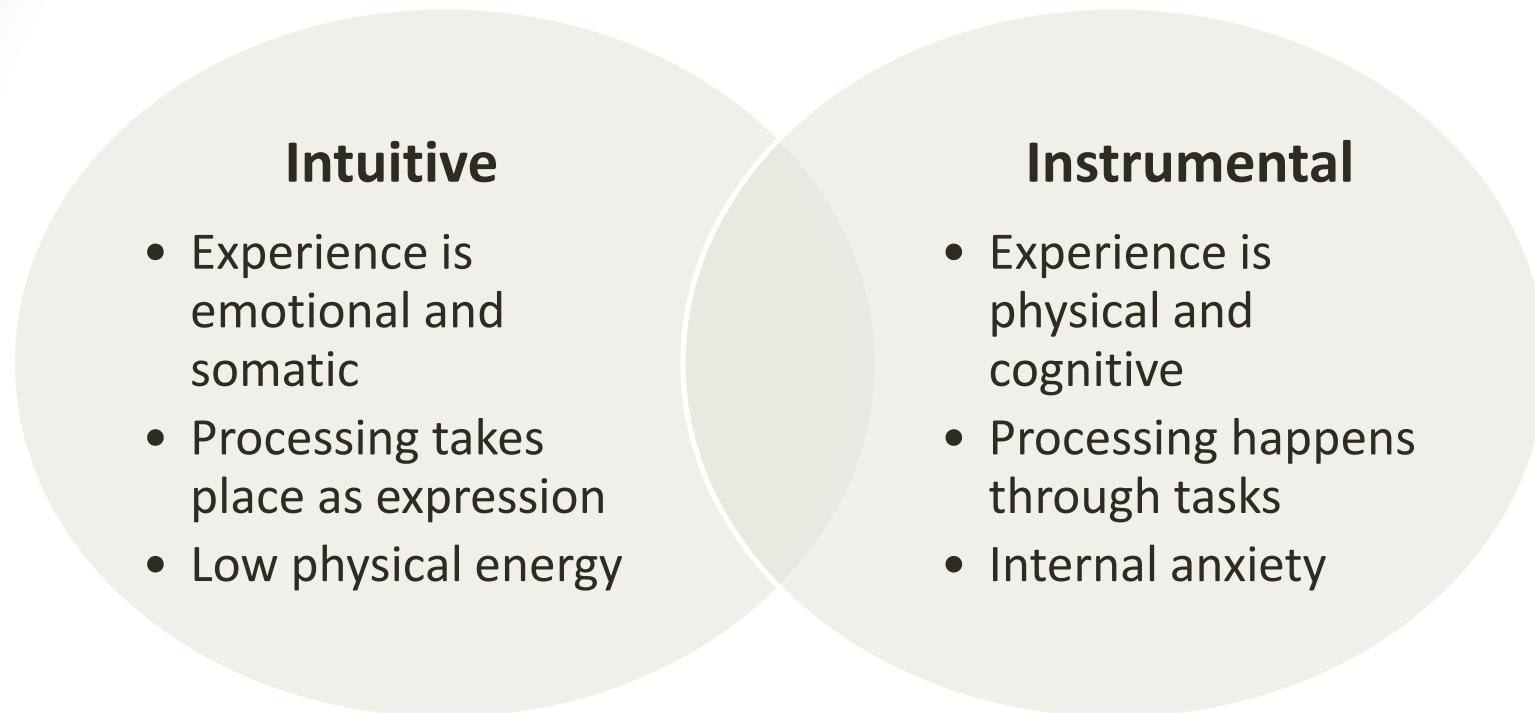
# Past Trauma Showing Up

- Struggle to trust self
- Fractured sense of safety
- Comparison to others' grief process
- Impaired ability to express or tolerate grief emotions
- Impulsive decision making
- Increased reactivity and relationship conflict
- Challenges in focus and concentration
- Experience of grief may trigger traumatic memories

Be curious and compassionate with yourself  
Consider how past experiences are contributing  
Take action to soothe, nurture, and comfort yourself



# Styles of Grieving



Support for intuitive grievers: active listening and connection  
Support for instrumental grievers: practical information and opportunities to memorialize

# “Sticky” Feelings in Grief

## Guilt

- Journaling
- Radical transparency
- Voices of honest encouragement

## Anxiety

- Longer exhale
- Mantras
- Grounding techniques

## Anger

- Safe ways to express and release anger
- Exercise or movement
- Advocacy or making tangible change

# Compassion Fatigue

- Deep emotional and physical exhaustion
- Feeling like you have nothing left to give.
- Merging of traumatic stress and burnout
- “A gradual erosion of all the things that keep us connected to others in our caregiver role: our empathy, our hope, and of course our compassion.” Mathieu, 2012

Schedule solitary time to rest and unplug  
Nurture and soothe yourself with thoughts and activities  
Lean on others for support and comfort  
Cry with abandon to release painful pieces of grief

SELF  
CARE

# Automatic Thoughts

- “I don’t have time to care for myself.”
- “If I slow down I might fall apart.”
- “No one has any idea how overwhelmed I am right now.”
- “There is no other option but to just keep moving forward.”
- “I don’t have the bandwidth to choose words and actions that increase warmth and intimacy with my partner.”

# Barriers to Self Care

Lack of ability to ask for support

Lack of financial resources

Lack of energy

Lack of time



# Where do I begin?

- **Consider what is realistic:**
  - Time
  - Energy
  - Current limitations
- **Make a commitment to change:**
  - Start small
  - Accountability
  - Celebrate victories



# Attuning to Your Inner World

## Questions to ask:

What do  
you notice  
about your  
body?

How does  
your body  
react through  
the day?

How do you  
show  
compassion  
to yourself?





# Self Care Strategies

## Mind

Gratitude  
practice

Meditation  
practice

Expression of  
feelings

## Body

Water

Mints

Rest

Breaks

## Relationships

Share wants  
and needs

Intimate  
touch

Warm words  
and actions

# WENDT CENTER

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