

RESPONDING TO CHANGE AND LOSS DURING COVID-19

Many people are currently experiencing significant changes brought on by COVID-19. You may be feeling distracted, angry or scared. This is a normal human response to abnormal circumstances, as we often find comfort in things like security and certainty. As COVID-19 continues to disrupt our lives, it is important to acknowledge that we are experiencing the collective loss of security and certainty. This can be especially difficult for those of us supporting someone who is using alcohol and/or other drugs.

This factsheet will provide you with information about the losses you may be experiencing and some strategies to help you identify and tolerate the feelings surrounding these. This factsheet will give you some ideas for how you might respond, so that you can best support yourself, and your loved ones.



DEFINITION OF CRISIS

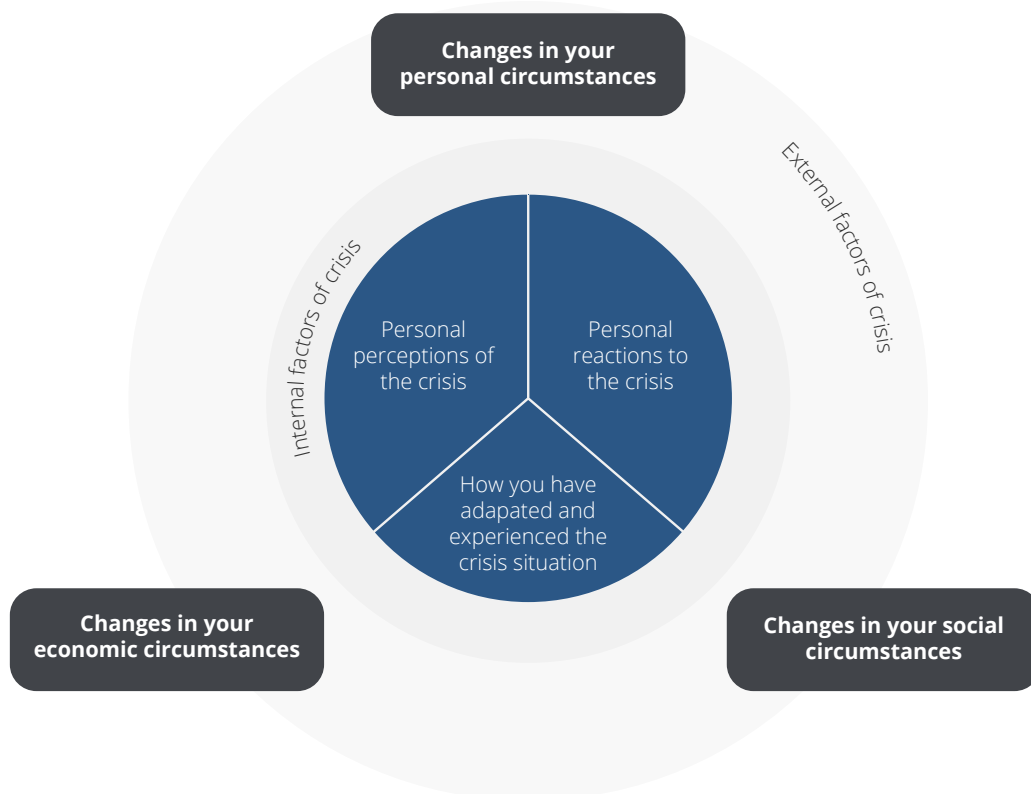
The definition of a crisis is different for everyone. However, many people find that during a crisis their usual ways of coping may not be as effective as they usually are.

Crisis is seen as a temporary occurrence that can lead to feelings of stress, tension, and disorganisation. These emotions can have a big impact on a person's ability to overcome daily obstacles or take in information. For some, there may also be a strong sense of feeling immobilised by the event.

If you are supporting someone using alcohol and/or other drugs, you may have already experienced a crisis. Or you may have experienced similar changes in your daily life to accommodate the support needs of your loved one. This shows you already have the skills to adapt to new, changing, or uncertain circumstances.

EXPERIENCING CRISIS

Crisis is a time of change. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought with it a sense that the world has changed and will remain changed forever in some way. It is helpful to focus on the way things have changed for you and your emotional response to these changes:



NAMING AND CLAIMING GRIEF

Self-Reflection Exercise

- Imagine an iceberg and to try to picture what it looks like.
- Icebergs are giant, floating pieces of ice in the ocean. A small part of it is easily visible and above the waterline. What lies below the waterline is not as easily seen. It can be useful to think of the ways we are similar to icebergs - some of the things about us are on the surface. Other aspects of who we are can be hidden below the surface, and not as immediately obvious.
- Some emotions experienced by crisis are more easily seen. This might be emotions such as annoyance, anger, frustration, distraction, fear. But there are other emotions that are important to recognise, focus on and sit with.



Not everyone may recognise that grief is another emotional response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Grief is a complex emotion, that can be 'below the surface' and less easy to identify outside of bereavement. While bereavement may be a reality for some during COVID-19, collectively we are all losing something.

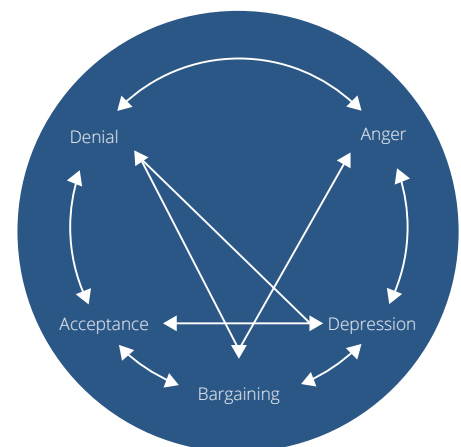
There are restrictions on the things we usually do, such as our daily activities and routines that bring about freedom, joy, purpose, happiness, or connectedness. Normal life feels temporarily lost. Many people are experiencing unemployment, financial instability, and a disrupted home life. The future can feel uncertain, and the plans you made may have been put on hold.

These are serious losses. It is important to acknowledge and name the associated feeling of grief. It is also important to take a moment to acknowledge that you are not alone in feeling it.

MOVING IN AND OUT OF GRIEF

5 stages of Grief

There might be times when you feel grief related to COVID-19 strongly and deeply, and other times where you don't feel it so much. There is no set or 'correct' way to experience grief. Your response can change and fluctuate on a daily basis. While the stages of grief described in this diagram often happen, there is no set or linear way of experiencing them:



FINDING MEANING

There is power in accepting and acknowledging the things you have control over. Rather than avoiding our feelings of grief, we can acknowledge them and tolerate them. While we cannot control the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic is happening, we can find ways to proceed and cope.

ACCEPTANCE

I can wash my hands

I can keep in contact with others over the internet or phone

I can maintain a safe distance from others

I can still savour the activities I enjoy from home

I can try to maintain a routine

MEANING

I am not as isolated as I feel

I can connect through technology and the internet

I will handle this

I can keep trying

I want to learn from it and grow

Most of us have never experienced anything like this. However, many of us have been through challenging experiences before. You have skills and strengths that have helped you heal and recover in the past.


RECOVERING FROM CRISIS

As things return to normal, most of us will also find and return to a new kind of normal. It is important to recognise that most people will be resilient and bounce back, once the crisis has passed. Crisis will test people in different ways, and some may need support to move towards recovery. For some people, stressful events have the potential to bring about memories or feelings related to past crisis events.

IF THIS HAS RAISED ANY CONCERNS, PLEASE CONTACT ONE OF THE SERVICES BELOW:


This factsheet has included a list of services and resources to support you. Seek professional help if you are feeling overwhelmed or as though you cannot cope.

Lifeline

 13 11 14

 www.lifeline.org.au

National Alcohol and Other Drug Information Service

 1800 250 015

For more evidence-based information, resources and links to support services relating to crystal methamphetamine please visit Cracks in the Ice. The Family and Friends Support Program also provides more information/resources and support for families concerned about a loved ones AOD use.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES VISIT CRACKS IN THE ICE AND/OR THE FAMILY AND FRIENDS SUPPORT PROGRAM