



## **Grieving the Loss of Normalcy**

By Kristen Rohm

We are all grieving. We have all lost our normal lives. We have been 'sheltering in place' for many weeks now. Our schools have closed for the rest of the year. Many of us, the lucky ones, are working from home. Unfortunately, too many of us have lost our jobs or had our hours reduced. Some of us must continue to go out to our work which means that we are at far higher risk of catching COVID19 because we are interacting with many people.

There has been a lot of loss for all of us. Loss of important events like school, sports, music. Large life markers like graduation, weddings, births and deaths. We are not able to gather in comfort or in celebration and it's hard. We may be surprised by all our feelings -- sadness, fear, laughter, anxiety, anger, gratitude, depression all mixed up and right near the surface.

Families are at home, spending much more time together without the structures and routines of regular family life. Young children need constant attention and supervision from parents who are also expected to work. Many are taking care of aging parents or partners whose caregivers can no longer make home visits. Others are alone, day after day. And none of us know how long this uncertainty will last.

Maybe the hardest thing of all is that we have lost the illusion of being in control of our lives. And we have lost our sense of safety for we are all vulnerable now.

There are so many things, small and large, that we have had to give up. Some days it might be the big things that get us down or fill our minds with endless worries. Other days, it might be the smallest thing that breaks our heart. My young adult son lives a few minutes away. I can no longer hug him. How I miss those hugs. What do you miss? What is the most poignant thing you have lost?

Let's all take a breath together. Remember, we are in this together. We are all grieving. We have all lost so much of what we knew, expected and planned for. There is no normal anymore, or rather the new normal is just so very strange. And yet, we have been reminded in clear and concrete ways that we are all connected. Across the globe, all of humanity is affected by the

same virus. For me there is comfort in knowing that you and I share this experience, we are in these tough and challenging times together.

So I take a breath and I remind myself, in this moment, I am well. In this moment, I have what I need. In this moment, all of the human family shares my worry, my sadness, my exhaustion. I am not alone. You are not alone. We are connected by our shared experiences. I am sending my care and compassion to you. I hope you will also send me yours. May we both find moments of unexpected beauty to lighten our days. May we both be kind to ourselves and each other. May we both know gratitude. We are getting through this together.