Cancelled by COVID-19: Managing Disappointment

In addition to fear and anxiety, COVID-19 is causing many to struggle with feelings of disappointment. Whether it is a cancelled celebration or a postponed vacation, if not managed in a healthy way, disappointment can lead to lingering feelings of sadness and even depression. Here are four positive steps to help work through feelings of disappointment.

1) Give yourself permission to be disappointed. Adults are often so uncomfortable with negative emotions that there is a tendency to try to rush past them. However, if you allow yourself to experience the disappointment, as well as any other feelings you’re experiencing such as sadness and anger, you stand a better chance of being able to process your feelings in a healthy way. Genuinely experiencing emotions, no matter how painful, is part of the human experience. As you learn how to move through negative emotions rather than circumventing them, you help strengthen your personal resilience.

2) Find support. There is an old Yiddish saying, “Man plans, and God laughs.” As you know, the unexpected can suddenly pull the rug out from under cherished plans. Maybe you also know that when you share your disappointment with someone you trust, you will find support. Talking about disappointment can help release some of its fuel. In addition, the person you share with can offer comfort and may help you gain additional perspective.

3) Identify what you value. Disappointment reveals what really matters. If you are dejected because your child’s graduation ceremony was cancelled due to coronavirus, what does that reveal about what you care about? Is it a reflection of how proud you are of them or how eager you were to celebrate their achievement? Or, did you view their graduation as your graduation as well? Digging deeper and understanding what is at the root of your disappointment can be a very healthy exercise. From there you can move on to other ways to honor what you value.

4) Channel your disappointment. Once you uncover what you value, you can channel the energy of your disappointment to positive actions honoring that value. For the cancelled graduation, as an example, perhaps that means offering to spearhead a virtual graduation ceremony or creating a video with personal messages of congratulations.

While you do not have the power to change things outside of your control, you are able to control how you respond. If you are dealing with a COVID-19 related disappointment, know that you are not alone and, there is the possibility of understanding, learning from and growing through disappointment. If you’d like support to dig deeper and better understand your feelings, or if you’re feeling overwhelmed and don’t know where to start, don’t hesitate to reach out to the EAP for support, at 877-313-4455.
Upcoming Live Support Webinars

EAP is offering webinars on a variety of COVID-19 related topics to support emotional and mental health and wellbeing. Register for an upcoming live session or view a pre-recorded session on-demand below. More sessions will be added regularly. See all Webinars.

Self-Care with the Washington State EAP
- Tuesday, May 5, 2020  3:30-5:00pm - REGISTER

Working from Home during COVID-19: Coping with the Challenges, Setting Yourself Up for Success
- Monday, May 4, 2020  2:30-4:00pm - REGISTER

Parenting and Family Challenges: Helping Yourself and Your Family through COVID-19
- Monday, May 4, 2020   10:00-11:30am - REGISTER

How to Build Resilience When Your Job Involves Helping Others in Crisis
- Tuesday, May 5, 2020  9:00-10:30am - REGISTER
- Thursday, May 7, 2020  9:30-11:00am - REGISTER

Washington: Coming Together to Learn, Support, & Connect
- Wednesday, May 6, 2020 9:00-9:30am— REGISTER

It’s Tough to Stop Touching Your Face! Try These Two Mindful Practices

You can find lots of advice on the internet to help you try to stop touching your face, from sources that include the BBC, the New York Times, even a Wikihow. From the world of mindfulness, here are two simple practices that you might try, adapted from Mindful.org:

1) **Work with a positive guideline instead of a negative guideline.** From cognitive scientist **George Lakoff’s** work on framing, research tells us that when we say to ourselves something like “Don’t think of an elephant,” we automatically think of the very thing we don’t want to think of – an elephant, which is included in the “frame” of the statement. Similarly, saying to ourselves “Don’t touch your face” puts the focus on the thing we *don’t* want to do. Instead, frame your intention in a positive manner, with a question like “Are my hands below my neck?” or an aim like “Rest my hands on my keyboard/in my lap.”

2) **Cultivate an awareness of your hands through hand meditation.** Similar to sitting or walking meditation, your hands can be used as a focus of awareness, so that you can gradually become more conscious of the location of your hands. Instead of following your breath or feeling your feet as they’re touching the ground, rest your attention on your hands. Slow down and spend a few moments noticing qualities of the surface your hands are touching, such as temperature and hardness, and any sensations in your hands. You might try this when you’re out and about and especially concerned about touching your face, such as in the car you can feel your hands as they rest on the steering wheel, or when you enter your house you can feel your hand on the doorknob of your front door (which hopefully will remind you to wash your hands right after you enter!).

For additional free mindfulness resources for support during COVID-19, visit the [Mindful.org COVID page](#).