

## Conversation Guide: Finding Meaning: Loss and Grief in the Time of Corona

*Living Room Conversations offers a simple, sociable and structured way to practice communicating across differences while building understanding and relationships. Typically, 4-6 people meet in person or by video call for about 90 minutes to listen to and be heard by others on one of our nearly 100 [topics](#). Rather than debating or convincing others, we take turns talking to share, learn, and be curious. No preparation is required, though background links with balanced views are available on some topic pages online. Anyone can host using these italicized instructions. [Hosts also participate](#).*

### I. Introductions: Why We're Here (~10 minutes)

*Each participant has 1 minute to introduce themselves.*

- Share your name, where you live, what drew you here, and if this is your first conversation.

### II. Conversation Agreements: How We'll Engage (~5 minutes)

*These will set the tone of our conversation; participants may volunteer to take turns reading them aloud.*

- **Be curious and listen to understand.** Conversation is as much about listening as it is about talking. You might enjoy exploring how others' experiences have shaped their values and perspectives.
- **Show respect and suspend judgment.** People tend to judge one another. Setting judgement aside opens you up to learning from others and makes them feel respected and appreciated. Try to truly listen, without interruption or crosstalk.
- **Note any common ground as well as any differences.** Look for areas of agreement or shared values that may arise and take an interest in the differing beliefs and opinions of others.
- **Be authentic and welcome that from others.** Share what's important to you. Speak from your experience. Be considerate of others who are doing the same.
- **Be purposeful and to the point.** Do your best to keep your comments concise and relevant to the question you are answering. Be conscious of sharing airtime with other participants.
- **Own and guide the conversation.** Take responsibility for the quality of your participation and the conversation as a whole. Be proactive in getting yourself and others back on track if needed. Use an agreed upon signal like the "time out" sign if you feel the agreements are not being honored.

### III. Question Rounds: What We'll Talk About

*Optional: a participant can keep track of time and gently let people know when their time has elapsed.*

#### Round One: Getting to Know Each Other (~10 min)

*Each participant can take 1-2 minutes to answer one of these questions:*

- What are your hopes and concerns for your family, community and/or the country?
- What would your best friend say about who you are?
- What sense of purpose / mission / duty guides you in your life?

## **Round Two: Exploring the Topic -- Finding Meaning: Loss and Grief in the Time of Corona (~40 min)** *One participant can volunteer to read this paragraph.*

This conversation guide is part of a six-guide series exploring our experience during the pandemic. Resources that may be helpful in understanding the grief experience include this Harvard Business Review article.

Grief happens when people experience death or other significant losses. Decades ago, Elizabeth Kubler-Ross described five responses to grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Everyone's experience is individual. We may not experience all of those responses. We may find our thoughts, feelings and moods changing on a daily or hourly basis as our experience and awareness of our loss shifts. The Covid-19 pandemic challenges us in ways most of us have never imagined -- and is causing changes we may perceive as losses in all areas of our lives. Viktor Frankl, psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor, tells us that having purpose helps us navigate during difficult times. Grief expert David Kessler suggests that our ultimate task is to find meaning and purpose even as we grieve what is lost. What is your experience?

*Take ~2 minutes each to answer a question below without interruption or crosstalk. After everyone has answered, the group may take a few minutes for clarifying or follow up questions/responses. Continue exploring additional questions as time allows.*

- What have you noticed about your feelings and behavior during this time? What has changed? What has surprised you?
- What losses related to the Coronavirus have you experienced?
- What losses have been most difficult to deal with? How have you coped?
- What story from this time has been most inspirational for you? How does it impact your own experience?
- Kessler says that finding meaning in our pain can transform our experience and reduce our suffering. Has that been true for you? What happened?
- What is your sense of purpose? How has that been present with you during this pandemic?

## **Round Three: Reflecting on the Conversation (~15 min)**

*Take 2 minutes to answer one of the following questions:*

- What was most meaningful / valuable to you in this Living Room Conversation?
- What learning, new understanding or common ground was found on the topic?
- How has this conversation changed your perception of anyone in this group, including yourself?
- Is there a next step you would like to take based upon the conversation you just had?

## **Closing (~5 min)**

- *Give us feedback!* Use [livingroomconversations.org/feedback-form/](https://livingroomconversations.org/feedback-form/) or QR code
- *Donate!* Make more of these possible; give at [livingroomconversations.org/donate/](https://livingroomconversations.org/donate/)
- *Join or host more conversations!* With a) this group by exchanging your emails; b) others in person and/or by video call online. Get more involved or learn how to host at [livingroomconversations.org/get-involved/](https://livingroomconversations.org/get-involved/)



*Thank you!*