

## Creating Healthy Work Environments VIRTUAL 2021

### Exploring Grief and Fostering Resilience for Educators and Students During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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**Purpose:** The COVID-19 pandemic impacted institutions of higher education in unprecedented ways, including rapid transitions to online education, integration of innovative and alternate technologies to facilitate learning, and modifications or cancellation of on-campus events. Change has been persistent in academia, with educators and students continuing to seek a “new normal” in a climate of ongoing unpredictability. Throughout this change, educators and students alike experience loss. For educators, losses include normalcy and routine, economic and employment stability, connection with students and peers, work-life balance and boundaries, and predictability. Students experience different losses, including clinical and preceptorship experiences, access to campus resources, graduations and pinning ceremonies, social engagement with friends and classmates, and traditional college student life. In response to these changes, educators and students have been continuously challenged to be flexible and work efficiently. However, throughout this process, educators and students have not been given an opportunity to grieve their losses. The purpose of this presentation is to explore grief in the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and present coping strategies to foster resilience for educators and students.

**Methods:** A series of three webinars regarding grief and loss during the COVID-19 pandemic were developed by a team of researchers, one with expertise in nursing education and palliative care and the other in innovative education for millennial and Generation Z students. Each presentation explored grief from the perspectives of educators, students about to graduate, and students remaining in nursing programs. The webinars also identified key coping strategies each population can implement to promote resilience and mental health. These presentations were delivered via Sigma’s GoToMeeting webinar platform in March and April 2020. They remain available within the Sigma Repository. This presentation will adapt the original webinar series to focus on grief, coping strategies, and resilience as the COVID-19 pandemic persists.

**Results:** The webinars were attended by approximately 40, 60 and over 100 individuals initially, and have been accessed via the repository subsequently. Some educators utilized the presentations to explore their own grief in the wake of the initial development of the COVID-19 pandemic. Other educators promoted student attendance (required or extra credit) to encourage them to explore their emotional reactions to the change and loss.

**Conclusion:** Educators and students continue to experience new and persistent loss as the COVID-19 pandemic escalates across the country. What was initially experienced as acute loss is now changing into complicated grief for many individuals. Concerns about what the future of nursing education and healthcare will be, for educators and

students, remain at an all-time high. Educators and students need to utilize strategies to promote their resilience while the pandemic persists.

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**Title:**

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**Keywords:**

grief, nursing education and resilience

**Abstract Summary:**

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted academic institutions in unprecedented ways. A series of webinars regarding grief and loss was delivered by a team of researchers. This presentation will adapt the original webinar series to focus on grief in the ongoing pandemic and present strategies to foster resilience for educators and students.

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