

**Especially for this year –
Especially for kids and youth and adults –**

Naming Loss and Gratitude: A Spiritual Practice for Lent

Each Day = Naming One Loss + One Gratitude, “One Anothering” our cares to God

This has been a hard year. It has been filled with loss. It has also held things we can be grateful for. Naming our loss helps us be honest and keeps us from minimizing what we are experiencing. Naming gratitude “prevents us from drowning in sorrow.” Being together with one another gives us strength for life.

Consider a daily practice of “naming loss and gratitude.” It’s a spiritual practice that gives us a chance to practice empathy with one another in all that we’ve been through this year.

Each day, name one loss and one gratitude. That’s it. Just name one loss and one gratitude. You can do this by yourself or around the table (or virtual table) with others. This practice is especially effective in helping families communicate on a deeper level. Take turns. You can simply say the words or write or draw them. Whatever you choose, notice and receive the losses and the gratitudes, then let them be without trying to fix a thing. Be with each other. Conclude with a simple prayer, “Bless us, O Lord.”

Be real. Be honest.
God is listening, entering in...



Excerpts from an article by Brad M. Griffin, written Mar 20, 2020,
at the beginning of the pandemic – and perhaps even more true today...
<https://fulleryouthinstitute.org/blog/naming-loss-and-gratitude-with-young-people>

Naming loss and gratitude with young people in these uncertain days

What a difference a week can make. Or even a few hours.

Many of us are looking back at the not-so-distant past and remembering what little time we had to prepare. The flood of information. The contradictory decisions....

We are feeling it in our household, as I'm sure you are too. For my middle schooler and two high schoolers, the novelty quickly turned into sadness, anger, anxiety, and questions that can't be answered.

Swim meets wiped away.
Baseball season crushed.

A host of senior events canceled, just when being a senior started to get fun.

And that's just naming one loss per child, for just my three kids, for just the past few days. When I look outward to our church and community, the sense of overwhelm comes quickly....

(continued on the back of this page...)

Two lists

In the midst of this moment—which is clearly becoming much more than a moment—we are all in need of practices to help us make meaning from our experiences....

***Tweet this:** Our students need more than just online youth group. They need help naming and processing their new reality.*

In our family, we put up two lists on the wall this week: One says **Grateful**, the other **Loss**. We're listing our losses, because naming them is really important. Little things and big things. The cancelled spring break trip. Not getting to go to church. Wondering if graduation will happen.

We're also listing gratuudes. Finding things to be thankful for, and the little surprises of this disruption. Playing guitar again. Watching movies together. Not packing lunches every morning. Having devices to connect with friends.

This practice of naming both losses and gifts is important for a few reasons.

1. Naming loss helps us be honest about grief.

We don't have to pretend like everything is just fine. We can name what's lost, and lament it together. We can say, "That's rough." We can be sad. We can acknowledge sources of anger and irritability. There are plenty of those sources right now, and more coming.

2. Naming loss keeps us from minimizing or silver-lining.

As a parent, my knee-jerk reaction is to minimize. I find that I have to intentionally practice holding back my "your life isn't so bad" statements to my privileged middle-class first-world kids. While that sentiment may be true—even now—it's unhelpful as a first response.

Brené Brown urges us to remove the words "at least" from our vocabulary as we learn to practice empathy. Saying "at least" is a way to try to add a silver lining around a dark-cloud experience. Instead, most of us just want someone else to acknowledge that our experience is sad, and to be with us in our sadness for a while.

...We need to see and name the losses for what they are and how we're all experiencing them. Developmentally, adolescents naturally react to loss more emotionally—some blow up, some shut down. The emotion may not match the experience. You could see anger, tears, or even goofy laughter that seems inappropriate to the moment. Go with it. Then help them name the loss that they're feeling.

3. Naming gratitude prevents us from drowning in sorrow.

We can be honest about what's hard without getting stuck... Finding things to be thankful for is a research-proven practice that can help young people, and all of us, manage both daily struggles and bigger challenges.

Experts tell us that practicing gratitude can increase positive emotions, sleep quality, and overall well-being. At the very least, naming a positive thing about our day can help us mitigate some of the loss. There's no need to try to cancel out all the sadness by manufacturing gratitude, but it's important to find something that is going right in our lives when all feels wrong.

Brad M. Griffin

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