

# Understanding, going through, and managing loss, grief, and bereavement: Life with the Covid-19 pandemic for Latinos with a view on Latino Men *Session 2*

Presented by Elizabeth Robles, LPC, CT, EOLD  
July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Presented in 2022 by the National Hispanic and Latino Addiction Technology Transfer Center (ATTC), and the Hispanic and Latino Prevention Technology Transfer Center (PTTC), National Latino Behavioral Health Association (NLBHA) P.O. Box 1360, Pena Blanca, NM 87041.

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At the time of this publication, Miriam E. Delphin-Rittmon, Ph.D, served as Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Administrator of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

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Presented 2022

# HOUSEKEEPING

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The use of affirming language inspires hope.

**LANGUAGE MATTERS.**

**Words have power.**

**PEOPLE FIRST.**

The PTTC Network uses affirming language to promote the application of evidence-based and culturally informed practices.

10



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\* Map not to scale.



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## NLBHA's Mission

The Mission and Goal of The National Latino Behavioral Health Association is to influence national behavioral health policy, eliminate disparities in funding and access to services, and improve the quality of services and treatment outcomes for Latino populations.

# NLBHA's Objectives

NLBHA's Objective is to provide national leadership on mental health and substance abuse concerns of the Latino community. NLBHA's Policy Priorities are:

1. Targeted Capacity Expansion of Mental Health Services for Latinos
2. Latino Behavioral Health Evidenced Based Practices
3. Legislation to increase the number of Counselors/Therapists/Other Behavioral Health Practitioners
4. Funding for Co-Occurring Disorders of Alcohol and Substance Abuse
5. Opioid Crisis in the Latino Community
6. Suicide Prevention



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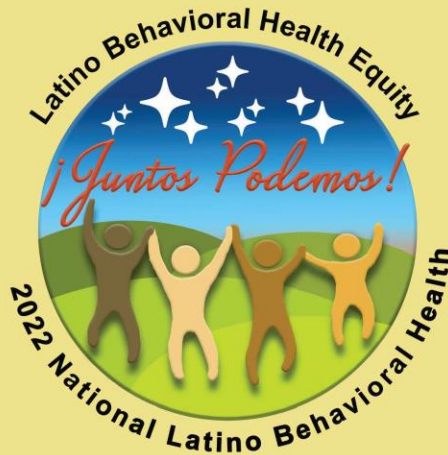


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## Today's presenter

Elizabeth Robles works in the El Paso region as a behavioral health care professional specializing in life changes, trauma, grief, and loss. Elizabeth is Certified in Thanatology: Death, Dying & Bereavement through the Association of Death Education Counseling (ADEC). Elizabeth brings to her practice a profound understanding of death coupled with a grounding in neuroscience. Her treatment approach offers patients the hope and strategies to facilitate continuous emotional renewal in the face of life's constant changes. She is also founder of the Facebook group, *Aqui Con Death*, as a bicultural space where people can learn and share their unique perspectives about la muerte, duelo y luto. In addition to her private practice, Elizabeth serves as Clinical Director for the MYC Institute of Integrative Health, an El Paso nonprofit organization which advocates for body/mind/spirit approaches to wellbeing. In 2020, Elizabeth became a Certified End of Life Doula.



Elizabeth Robles,  
LPC, CT, EOLD

# Understanding, going through, and managing loss, grief, and bereavement: Life with the Covid-19 pandemic for Latinos with a view on Latino Men *Session 2*

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July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022

# Quick Review on Loss, Grief, and Bereavement

- **Grief is the natural reaction to loss. Grief is both a universal and a personal experience.**
- **The more we understand that death is a natural part of living, the more we become comfortable with this concept.**
- **Recovery from loss, grief and bereavement is possible. Every one of us benefits from the notion and the possibility of healing and recovering from the intensity of the pain of loss.**

# Quick Review on Loss, Grief, and Bereavement

- **Symptoms related to loss may manifest in a physical, emotional, cognitive and spiritual way.**
- **There are many different types of losses and also types of griefs, depending on each circumstance.**
- **Latinos in the US have been severely affected by Covid-19 in many ways and public health official reports indicate that the number of casualties and infected individuals is disproportionately high.**

## Changes in quality of life and standards of living conditions for Latinos



- **Many Latinos in the US express they have lost their job or taken a pay cut.**
- **Had problems paying their bills.**
- **Attained food from the local food bank.**
- **Had problems paying rent or mortgage.**
- **Received government food assistance.**
- **Had trouble paying medical care**
- **Received unemployment benefits.**
- **Lost health insurance.**

Pew Research Center, 2022

# Changes in quality of life and standard of living conditions for Latinos



Our standard and quality of life is a core element for a person or family's growth, well-being and progress.

The pandemic has impacted the very center of this pillar for many Latinos. Due to the multiple and varying circumstances with the economy, the difficulty in the acquisition of goods and services, the disruptions in educational settings and the accentuated challenges in the ability to receive healthcare services, the overall view for many Latinos in the US is challenging and even more complex than it was before.

# The difficulty of not saying goodbye

One of the most prevalent and difficult challenges of the SARS CoV-2 contagion is the fact that millions of people throughout the world were not able to be with their ill loved one in the hospital settings at the time of hospitalization or death.



This reality and event(s) of an interrupted loss process can prompt many symptoms related to mental health disorders such as acute stress, anxiety, depression, substance abuse, trauma prolonged grief and complicated grief, to mention a few.

This can complicate the natural journey of grief and bring about other issues and challenges. At present, there is a lack of understanding the depth of what this means for Latinos.

The sense of prevalent fear, uncertainty and ambiguity have been the driving force of the pandemic across populations and many Latinos are deeply affected by not having had the opportunity to say goodbye to their loved ones.



# The difficulty of not saying goodbye



**No paying  
our respects,  
and the pain  
of it.**



## Latinos have been heavily affected by loss, grief, and bereavement because of Covid-19

The cultural implications that the phenomena of the pandemic has created for Latinos *is also palpable in the disruptions of our cultural views, norms, values, traditions, celebrations, rituals, ceremony, spirituality and religiosity.* The act of gathering to support each other in celebration, in the practice of faith and distress as a way of offering support especially at the time of illness, incapacity or death have been almost nonexistent in our ways to express up to present day.

# The disconnect between our norms, values, and coping systems in the face of Covid-19

The expression and practice of our values in the Cultura and the absence of these practices during the pandemic have created deep grooves in the psyche and spirit of Latinos, as part of our multiple losses.



# Grief and our brain

- ❖ The brain interprets grief as emotional trauma or PTSD.
- ❖ The human brain handles emotional trauma and stress using the same set of processes as for grief.
- ❖ Changes in brain function go largely undetected when an individual continues functioning normally, but these experiences still affect how the brain works.
- ❖ Even the effects of long-term chronic stress are reversible.
- ❖ Mindfulness and relaxation practices like journaling, cognitive behavior therapy, counseling, creativity, and meditation are strong as outlets for post-traumatic growth.
- ❖ These strategies allow feelings of safety, security, and calmness to return so that one can move forward.
- ❖ Traumatic experiences need to be worked through otherwise they will continue to be an obstacle in our lives.

Lisa Shulman, 2022

“

Grief is a normal protective process. This process is an evolutionary adaptation to promote survival in the face of emotional trauma.

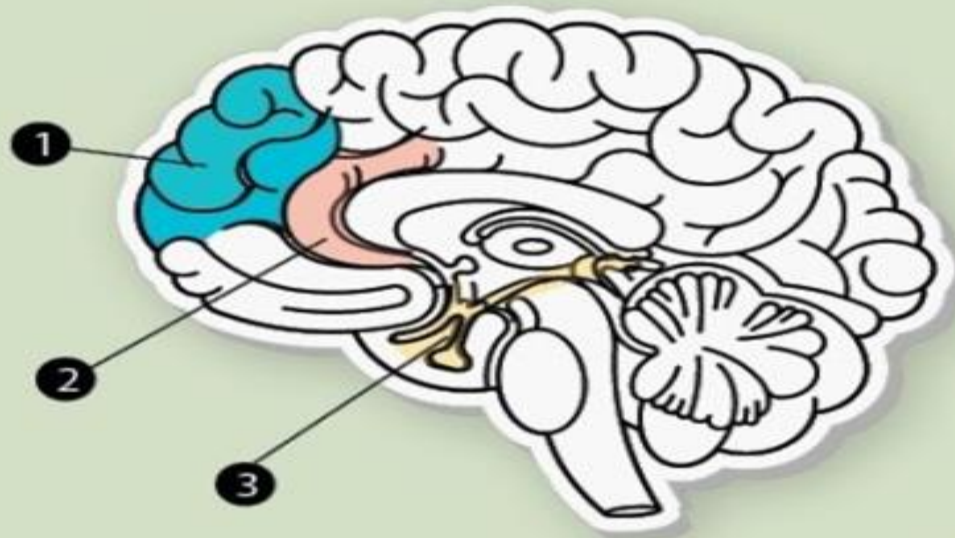
”

– Lisa M. Shulman, MD

AMERICAN BRAIN FOUNDATION

## BRAIN REGIONS AFFECTED BY GRIEF

- 1** The **prefrontal cortex**, the “thinking center” of the brain, is underactive.
- 2** The **anterior cingulate cortex**, the emotional regulation center of the brain, is underactive.
- 3** The **amygdala**, the fear center of the brain, is overactive.



## **Concerns About Unattended Grief For Latinos**

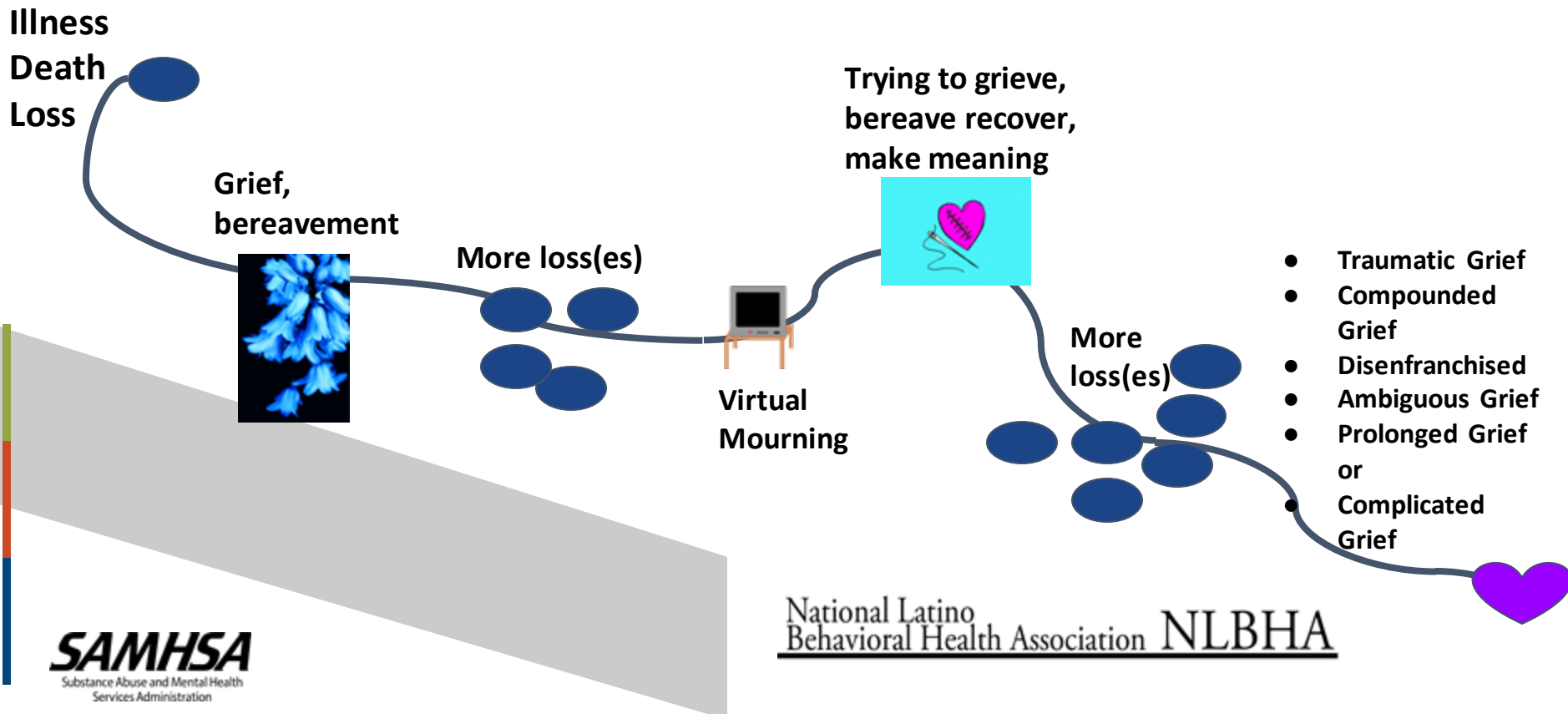
**Another concern for the losses that have been experienced in this pandemic is *Ambiguous Loss*.**

**This is a type of loss that leaves the grieved person with a sense of lack in the resolution of their questions.**

**Feeling an emotional lack or emptiness towards the closure of the actual process, especially in the initial grief experience.**

**In ambiguous loss there is much uncertainty about the future and coming to terms with the loss may be seem very difficult even surreal.**

# Compounded and Disenfranchised Grief May Be Hurting Us



## **Other Factors That May Complicate Grief and the Bereavement Journey**

**Continued isolation**

**Challenges to the acquisition of goods and services**

**Financial restraints**

**Secondary Losses**

**Mental health comorbidities**

**Physical illnesses**

**Continued stress about the pandemic**

**Feelings of guilt about hardships or losses from family/friends**

**from the country of origin**

**Losing the status in the family hierarchy due to inability to attend caregiving needs or funeral services in the country of origin**



## Important symptoms to consider during grief and loss

**Fear**  
**Denial**  
**Shame**  
**Guilt**

## Being Strong For Others and the Weight of That Responsibility



Bearing the brunt of activities and leadership during the journey of grief and loss can be very stressful and challenging. This may not end as time goes on.

This can make those grieved feel the insolation with more intensity, have a sense of disenfranchisement of their grief and may feel resentful toward others not aware of their feelings.

Share the sorrow.

Don't offer false comfort.

Offer practical help.

Be patient.

Encourage professional help when necessary.

# Understanding our Secondary Losses

**Our secondary losses will be part of our events, experiences, thoughts, beliefs and anything that is a result of the death of the person who has passed.**



## **There Is A Light Way Before The End Of The Tunnel -Recovering From Loss-**

- **Allow yourself to feel the loss**
- **Write a letter to the deceased person or talk to them**
- **Set up a space or an altar for your loved one**
- **Journal**
- **Talk to someone**
- **Remember grief affects us all**
- **Lend a supportive ear**
- **Prepare for recurring grief**
- **Celebrate that person's life if you can**
- **Keep a routine**



# Mil Gracias!

I Am  
grateful for you



# Resources

## Healing the Brain After Loss | Webinar

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZwhslOz7qY&t=597s>

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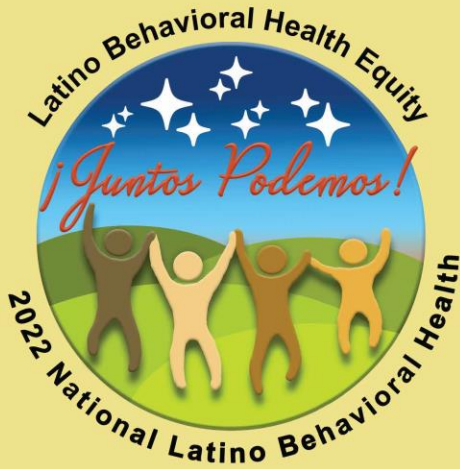


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# Tribute to Selena and Vicente Fernandez

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Join us for a special musical tribute featuring Pepe & Susie, a Mariachi Tribute to Vicente Fernandez and Jenny Sotongo as Selena, La Reina del Tex-Mex! Proceeds benefit the JTR Scholarship Fund.



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¡Gracias!  
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