

ASSOCIATION FOR  
MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS



*To Advocate. To Educate.  
To Empower. Together.*



**Mental Health Association  
of Nassau County, Inc.**



**Our Help Knows No Season**

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## **COVID-19 ONLINE BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUPS TO BE PROVIDED BY LONG ISLAND'S LEADING MENTAL HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS**

**RONKONKOMA AND HEMPSTEAD, NY – May 11, 2020** – People are unable to grieve the loss of loved ones in ways they are used to. No wakes for Christians. No shivas for Jews. No three-day mourning periods for Muslims.

That's why Long Island's two leading, county-based mental health organizations have begun offering online bereavement support groups designed to provide comfort, support, and "grief tools" to those who have lost loved ones to the COVID-19 virus. The first group begins on Tuesday, May 19, 2020.

Mandatory social distancing has sharply curtailed people's ability to grieve in conventional, in-person settings. In the absence of the intimate contact typically associated with the mourning process, these remote, weekly bereavement sessions aim to mollify the pain of individuals whose family members or close friends have succumbed to COVID-19.

The "COVID-19 Bereavement Support Group" initiative is hosted by the Suffolk County-based Association for Mental Health and Wellness and the Mental Health Association of Nassau County.

Guided by experienced grief counselors, the groups will convene remotely in 60- or 90-minute sessions via a secure Zoom line over the course of a four- or six-week period. There is no cost to take part and registration – which is limited to 12 participants per group – is on a first-come basis.

"As everyone can imagine, losing a loved one to the virus is a deeply painful and jarring experience," said Michael Stoltz, C.E.O. of the Association for Mental Health and Wellness, which is headquartered in Ronkonkoma. "We've identified skilled and sensitive grief counselors who are well qualified to help participants build comforting pathways for healing, even in a technologically remote setting."

“The pandemic’s restrictions largely prevent mourners from experiencing the reassuring feelings of hugs and other types of close-up contact,” said Jeffrey McQueen, Executive Director of the Hempstead-based Mental Health Association of Nassau County. “Grieving remotely can’t fully replace the face-to-face experience, but it can help reinforce feelings of hope and help fill the void.”

Participants in any of the five COVID-19 Bereavement Support Groups must be mourning the loss of a family member or close friend who has died from COVID-19. The group categories are:

**Grieving Adults Support Groups:** For people who have lost a loved one to coronavirus and cannot grieve in person with their loved ones. The group will bring together others who are struggling to come to terms with the loss, to create a sense of closure, and to grieve in community. There will be two groups in this category.

**Peer Bereavement Support Group:** For individuals experiencing a mental health condition who have lost a loved one to coronavirus. Participants have a safe and supportive space to share their stories with others who can truly relate to their pain and experiences.

**Veterans Bereavement Support Group:** For Veterans and their families who have lost someone to coronavirus and cannot grieve in person with their loved ones. This group will deal with issues specific to the Veterans community.

**Creative Arts Bereavement Support Group:** The making of art can serve as a safe outlet for the expression of thoughts and emotions relating to death and loss. By expressing these feelings in a symbolic manner, mourners can nurture their sense of control, organization, and containment. Participants may use such art supplies as copy paper, colored pencils, markers, crayons, scissors, and glue.

Interested parties may register at [www.bereavement.mhaw.org](http://www.bereavement.mhaw.org).

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### ***About the Association for Mental Health and Wellness***

The **Association for Mental Health and Wellness** (MHAW), a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) corporation based in Ronkonkoma, NY, provides programs, services, and advocacy for people facing mental health challenges with an enhanced focus on serving military Veterans.

MHAW dates back to 1955 with the incorporation of the Mental Health Association in Suffolk County (MHA Suffolk). In 1990, Clubhouse of Suffolk was launched, providing a wide array of vocational rehabilitation services and recovery programs. With the growing need to provide services for Veterans with PTSD and other battle-related brain injuries, Clubhouse merged with MHA Suffolk and Suffolk County United Veterans in 2014 to form the Association for Mental Health and Wellness.

MHAW is committed to the core practice values of empowerment, hope, opportunity, and cultural competence. All of the agency’s direct service workers are trained in the importance of addressing health from trauma-informed and whole person perspectives with enriched understanding of the social and economic conditions that contribute to physical and mental health and substance abuse.

MHAW’s Mental Health HelpLine can be reached at 631-471-7242 ext. 2. Their web address is [www.mhaw.org](http://www.mhaw.org).

### ***About the Mental Health Association of Nassau County***

The **Mental Health Association of Nassau County** (MHANC) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit membership organization dedicated to improving mental health in our community through advocacy, education, program development and the delivery of direct services.

Since its founding in 1953, MHANC has been an advocate for the needs of adults and children with psychiatric and emotional difficulties. This priority has guided our mission for over six decades and has led us to develop concrete rehabilitation services that benefit adults and children with a psychiatric diagnosis as well as Veterans. These community services include: housing, day programs, care coordination, financial management, crisis respite and continuing education for both mental health professionals and the community-at-large.

MHANC seeks to collaborate with other providers to continuously benefit the community and to promote whole person wellness for all. Our advocacy efforts include fighting discrimination laws and stigmatizing media messages, promoting the need for adequate funding for services and housing, and encouraging consumers to speak for themselves on personal and policy issues.

MHANC can be reached at 516-489-2322. Their web address is [www.mhanc.org](http://www.mhanc.org).

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