



a ritual for what we've learned & lost in covid

RITUALIST + THE JOY LIST
BETA V1 | APRIL 2021

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***THE TRAGEDY AT THE
END OF THIS TRAGEDY
WILL BE THE DESIRE
TO FORGET IT.***

Well of Wills Collective
The Ark: A Short Film

There is no formula for healing from a pandemic.

In addition to the immense loss of human life, there have been innumerable ambiguous losses to grieve. Some are as large (and small) as our way of life. Others are as small (and large) as a hug.

While the burden of this trauma has fallen unequally along lines of race and class, we collectively lack any structures for grieving losses like these. So we bury them as deep as we can, and they remain suppressed and unprocessed.

But collective trauma requires communal healing.

This guide is an invitation to gather some people, slow down, mourn what you've lost, and lift up what you've learned. It is shaped by insights from psychologists, social workers, and grief experts, along with our two decades of combined experience crafting spaces for personal and communal growth. Use it, please, to mark this moment of transition with intention and attention -- in whatever way feels right for you.

May you be gentle with yourself, and generous with others.

EZRA BOOKMAN
RITUALIST FOUNDER

JILLIAN RICHARDSON
THE JOY LIST FOUNDER

best practices

TIME

Set aside at least 15 minutes for your personal reflection, and about an hour for your group gathering. Find time that feels special, unhurried, and outside your normal daily routine.

MAKE IT YOUR OWN

Make it your own: This is a description, not a proscription; a scaffold, not a skyscraper. We hope you will customize, remix, and embellish it to reflect your values and needs.

JUST LISTEN

It's tempting to offer a solution when you hear someone else's pain. Yet the simple act of being heard is transformative in and of itself.

TIMEKEEP WITH CLASS

A timekeeper helps ensure everyone has an equal chance to speak. When it's time to move on, a friendly wave is better than your phone's loud alarm.

LET THERE BE SILENCE

Take a breath in between shares to let them settle. Allow a few minutes to think or journal about each question after it's asked, so folks don't feel rushed to speak on the spot.

BE BRAVE

It can be scary to be vulnerable. Yet by bravely showing a tender side, you give other people in your group permission to do the same.

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***IF WE DO NOT GRIEVE
WHAT WE MISS, WE
ARE NOT PRAISING
WHAT WE LOVE.***

Martin Prechtel
The Smell of Rain on Dust

preparation

1 GATHER YOUR PEOPLE

We recommend getting together a circle of no more than 6 people. Friends or family, in your bubble or out of it, in person or online.

2 GATHER YOUR THOUGHTS

Before you meet, take some personal time to reflect on this past year. Grab a notebook and write a list of everything you've lost, big and small.

With so many deaths from Covid, all the other losses in our lives can seem insignificant. Even naming them can bring up feelings of judgement and shame. But they add up. As Lisa S. Zoll, a licensed clinical social worker, said in a recent interview for the New York Times:

“People don’t feel like they have the right to grieve. But we have to correct that thinking. Your grief is your grief. You can’t compare it to other people’s.”

Start from the beginning, when you first heard reports about Covid 19. What was the very first event you remember getting canceled? Trace your way through the entire year, through the first few weeks of lockdown, through the moments of despair and disconnection that you’ve tried to put behind you, all the way up to today. TIP: Scrolling through your camera roll or calendar can help jog your memory.

Ex. Social connections, financial security, time with grandchildren, graduation, birthday, trust in leaders or institutions, feelings of control, sense of self and identity

conversation

1 WELCOME

Name your purpose for coming together and what to expect during your gathering. Frame your time with some words of wisdom like a poem, song lyrics, or a quote.

2 GREET

Take a few minutes to go around and introduce yourself by sharing one moment or physical object that symbolizes your experience of this past year.

3 CENTER

Take three long, deep breaths together: the first for yourself, the second for everyone in your circle, and the third for the whole world.

4 HONOR

Hold space for 3 minutes and 10 seconds of silence to honor the lives of the 3.1 million people that have died this year, along with the friends and families who are grieving them.

conversation

5 LITANY OF LOSSES

Much of the suffering of this past year has been unnamed, silent, and siloed. Take turns reading your list of losses out loud, omitting any you don't feel comfortable sharing.

After the group reads, allow some time to share what thoughts and emotions came up. How did it feel to speak your losses out loud? To listen to the losses of others?

6 LISTEN & SHARE

After asking each of the questions below, let the group take a minute to quietly consider their answer. Next, allow each person to share one at a time for a few minutes uninterrupted. (If you run out of time to answer all three, that's okay -- they make great journaling prompts too).

+ Amidst all that was loss, what is one story of surprising joy or delight from this last year?

+ What are your hopes and your fears in this current complex moment of transition to a post-vaccinated world?

+ What lessons are you carrying forward from Covid? What promises are you willing to make today about how you'll move through the world differently?

7 CLOSE

Take 3 long deep breaths together: the 1st for yourself, the 2nd for everyone in your circle, and the third for the whole world. You might end with a spontaneous litany of gritudes popcorn style, or perhaps a poem, prayer, or other heartfelt intentional words.

integration

1 GRATITUDE

When we truly grieve what we've lost, it heightens our gratitude for what we have. In the days after the ritual, keep your gratitude goggles on. How many hands worked and put their lives at risk to feed you, heal you, and keep you safe so that you could make it to this moment? How might you express your gratitude? How might you work to ensure their protection and treat them as essential? When you experience something for the first time in over a year, how can you savor it with deeper appreciation?

2 TANGIBLE CHANGE

When the time feels right, change something noticeable and tangible in your space. Maybe you put that Covid symbol you shared under the bed for a while. Maybe you swap out the art above your desk that you have been staring at non-stop. Maybe you ceremoniously retire your Covid sweatpants and replace them with actual pants. You can host a "changing of the guard" ceremony with lots of pomp and...circumpants.

3 LETTING GO

You might not feel ready to part with your list of losses right after the ritual. You might even still be adding to it. But when the time comes, take the paper and symbolically return it back to the earth. For thousands of years, cultures around the world have used the earth as a vessel to receive their grief. You can bury grief in the earth, transform it through fire, wash it away with water, or let it flutter away in the wind. Whatever speaks to you.

Letting go, of course, is never a one time act. The sadness of this past year won't suddenly disappear when you burn a piece of paper (or when you get the vaccine for that matter). But it does give you permission to walk without the weight of it for a little while. And when it inevitably returns, it helps remind you that you don't have to hold on to it all the time.

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**TRANSFORMATION
IS AN UNRAVELING,
FOLLOWED BY A SLOW
AND SOMETIMES
PROLONGED STITCHING
BACK TOGETHER.**

Ida Benedetto
Patterns of Transformation

The Joy List

www.joylist.nyc
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Ritualist

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THIS IS A BETA VERSION

that is limited by our own life experience and culture. We are actively seeking to improve our material, and would welcome any feedback, suggestions, collaboration, and partnerships. **Please email hello@ritualist.life**

This ritual is not intended to diagnose, prevent, or treat any condition, or to be a substitute for medical care. If you or a loved one are suffering from depression or other mental health issues, please seek the support of a professional