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Laurier's Inspiring Conversations lecture on Blue Monday will explore pandemic-related grief and loss

WATERLOO – In the fourth lecture of Wilfrid Laurier University's Inspiring Conversations webinar series, two members of the Faculty of Social Work will explore topics of grief and loss – something many have experienced after nearly a year of living in a pandemic.

Faculty of Social Work Instructors [Cara Grosset](#) and [Charity Fleming](#), both registered social workers, will discuss the individual nature of grief and its manifestations, and offer suggestions on how to work through loss. The lecture will explore many forms of grief and mourning: losing loved ones, being unable to visit family members this past year, having to cancel events and trips, and unemployment, among other losses.

Mourning our Losses During the Pandemic will be held via Zoom on Monday, Jan. 18 from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The event is free to attend and everyone is welcome, but [registration is required](#).

"The pandemic has impacted everyone, from healthcare workers to the elderly isolated at home, and students aren't exempt from this," said Nathan Reeve, wellness education coordinator at Laurier's Waterloo campus and the moderator of the event. "Many of us are grieving and feeling disconnected from loved ones this winter. I hope the community takes away how important it is to recognize and honour losses both big and small."

Grosset, a PhD candidate in Social Work at Laurier, conducts research focused on people with intellectual disabilities and their experiences of grief following a death. In 2012, she was presented with the Bay Area Community Bereavement Achievement Award for her work developing and facilitating support programs for bereaved children, youth and young adults, and in 2017, she was awarded MADD Canada's Citizen of Distinction Award for her work with youth victims of impaired driving.

Grosset's lecture on Jan. 18 will focus on losses associated with and complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic, including the loss of healthy routines, predictability, employment and rituals. She will examine the complex emotions associated with these changes; for example, feeling guilty about being upset that your wedding was postponed while others have lost jobs, income and experienced the deaths of family members.

"I want to ensure people leave with the knowledge that their feelings of loss and grief are valid, and with ways to process the breadth of loss in their lives," said Grosset.

[Fleming](#) is an alumna of Laurier's Master of Social Work program and the co-owner and CEO of Qualia Counselling Services, which has five clinics throughout Waterloo Region. She is the director of Laurier's Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Teaching Program. Fleming uses cognitive behavioural therapy in her practice with priority populations including children and youth, Indigenous peoples and individuals experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder, and she is creating trauma treatment programs within Qualia's mental health clinics.

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At the Inspiring Conversations lecture, Fleming will speak about bolstering mental health and activities to cope with post-traumatic stress, and will offer specific strategies for processing sadness related to pandemic losses.

“Winter months in Canada can bring regular winter blues, but coping with the pandemic, social isolation and distancing, and all the related restrictions has created additional mental health stressors for almost everyone,” said Fleming. “I plan to give the audience key interventions to improve child, adolescent and adult mental health during this challenging time.”

January’s edition of Inspiring Conversations is part of a series of Blue Monday programming facilitated by Laurier’s Department of Donor and Alumni Relations. A full list of events and resources, including a trivia night and exercise videos, can be found [here](#).

Laurier would like to recognize the support of its Office of Indigenous Initiatives while organizing this event.

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