

# COPING with GRIEF & LOSS

**COUNSELING AND  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES**  
UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA

**215-898-7021**

*(including nights / weekends to reach CAPS counselor on call)*

3624 MARKET STREET, FIRST FLOOR WEST  
Philadelphia, PA 19104

MON | FRI 9 am - 5 pm  
TUES | WED | THURS 9 am - 7 pm  
SAT 10 am - 3 pm

[www.vpul.upenn.edu/caps](http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/caps)



## ALL PEOPLE EXPERIENCE GRIEF DIFFERENTLY, BUT SOME OF THE TYPICAL FEELINGS INCLUDE:

*A sudden, unexpected death of someone you know can be an intense experience. You may feel puzzled, shocked, angry, sad. You might want to retreat, and/or avoid class, friends, family, and social activities. Some students sleep or eat when distressed, others can't rest and have no appetite.*

*Grief can result in a wave of overwhelming emotions and coping can be slow and painful. People process grief in different ways. Some cry and talk, others hold it in. Grief must be worked through to get to a place of healthy acceptance, remembrance, and progressing with your life.*

### DENIAL AND SHOCK

DEATH CAN BE DIFFICULT TO ACCEPT. YOU MAY REFUSE TO BELIEVE IT AND WON'T WANT TO DISCUSS WITH ANYONE.

### ANGER

SOMETIMES GRIEF IS MIXED WITH RAGE. YOU MAY FEEL ANGRY AT THE UNFAIRNESS OF LIFE OR EVEN AT THE PERSON WHO DIED.

### BARGAINING

SOME PEOPLE MAY BARGAIN SPIRITUALLY, OFFERING TO TRADE A POSSESSION OR PART OF THEIR LIFE TO BRING BACK A LOVED ONE.

### GUILT

SOMETIMES PEOPLE FEEL GUILTY FOR SURVIVING, FOR MOVING ON, OR FOR MAKING NEW CONNECTIONS AND MEMORIES AFTER A LOSS.

### DEPRESSION

LOSS CAN LEAD TO MOOD FLUCTUATIONS, SADNESS, DESPAIR, AND DIFFICULTY FUNCTIONING AS USUAL.

### LONELINESS

THE DEATH OF SOMEONE CLOSE CAN LEAVE YOU FEELING LONELY GOING THROUGH THE ROUTINE OF YOUR DAILY LIFE.

### ACCEPTANCE

EVENTUALLY, THE REALITY OF LOSS LEADS TO ACCEPTANCE. SLOWLY RENEWING CONNECTIONS, CREATING NEW GOALS AND RESUMING YOUR ROUTINE WILL HELP YOU COME TO TERMS WITH THE LOSS.

### HOPE

WITH TIME, SUPPORT, AND RESILIENCE, MOST PEOPLE REACH A STAGE WHERE THEY CAN BALANCE PAINFUL MEMORIES OF THEIR LOSS WITH HOPE AND ANTICIPATION FOR THE FUTURE.

## HELPING YOURSELF GET THROUGH THE GRIEF PROCESS

### PARTICIPATING IN SOCIAL/CULTURAL RITUALS

Prayer, memorial services, family traditions, speaking with respected community leaders and other cultural rituals can help you acknowledge, express, and cope with grief and loss. You may find comfort in sharing your sorrow and feel less alone while receiving others' comfort and support. Participating in these rituals can help you find meaning in life and death and accept your loss.

### UTILIZING SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Sharing your loss with family and friends may bring a new sense of connection and gradual diminishing of the pain. Talking, sharing, crying, and remembering are all important ways of recovering from grief.

### STICKING TO A ROUTINE

Maintaining a schedule even when you do not feel like it can provide necessary structure and normalcy as you process your grief.

### EXPRESSING YOUR FEELINGS

Talking about your feelings can be extremely powerful. Writing, music, and art may also help you express yourself and heal.

### REMEMBERING AND HONORING YOUR LOVED ONE

Commemorating birthdays or anniversaries are an important way to honor and remain connected with those you loved and lost. Rituals can create togetherness in a group with shared pain and memories.

## WHAT NOT TO DO

- DON'T MAKE HUGE LIFE CHANGES IMPULSIVELY
- DON'T NUMB YOURSELF WITH ALCOHOL OR DRUGS
- DON'T ISOLATE YOURSELF FROM OTHERS
- DON'T EXPECT DIFFICULT FEELINGS TO DISAPPEAR QUICKLY
- DON'T BE HARD ON YOURSELF, WE ALL COPE IN DIFFERENT WAYS

## How COUNSELING CAN HELP

Grief can disrupt your daily life, causing problems with sleep, appetite, motivation or concentration. You may be despondent and have no interest in work or socializing.

Counseling can help you make sense of thoughts and reactions to grief and develop a coping strategy. Some worry that sharing these thoughts may be a burden on friends and family. If so, it may be easier to share feelings of anger, guilt, and sadness with a professional. Grief is difficult to process, but it can be overcome.

People experiencing loss can sometimes feel such despair that they contemplate suicide. If you have any such thoughts, please contact a mental health professional, such as CAPS (215-898-7021).

## Penn RESOURCES

### CAPS

*(including nights / weekends to reach CAPS counselor on call)*

215-898-7021

### OFFICE OF THE CHAPLAIN

215-898-8456

### HELP LINE

215-898-HELP (4357)

### RAP LINE

(Reach A Peer, 9PM - 1AM)

215-573-2RAP (2727)

### SPECIAL SERVICES

215-898-6600

### STUDENT HEALTH SERVICE

215-746-3535

### OFFICE OF THE VICE PROVOST FOR UNIVERSITY LIFE/

### STUDENT INTERVENTION SERVICES

215-898-6081

### WEINGARTEN LEARNING

### RESOURCES CENTER

215-573-9235

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