

Coping with Grief and Loss

Grief impacts your whole self: body, brain, mind, and spirit—not just emotions.

- Emotional waves: Sadness, yearning, depressed mood, mood changes, tearfulness, and crying are normal ups and downs in grief
- Feelings of helplessness, loss of control, panic, anxiety, fear of death, shock, denial, or numbness
- Guilt, shame, remorse, regret, anger, or even relief as mixed emotions surface
- Loneliness from withdrawal or feeling disconnected from others
- Physical shifts: Changes in sleep/eating patterns, fatigue, exaggerated startle response
- Body arousal: Anxiety symptoms, increased illnesses (headaches, colds, stomach aches, back pain, hypertension)

How to Help a Friend

- Be direct and genuine: Speak openly about the loss. Avoid false cheer or minimizing their pain; just let them feel what they feel.
- Show up: Your presence matters. Call, visit, or share a meal to provide consistent companionship.
- Listen without judging: Offer the gift of silence. Let them vent without offering unsolicited advice or feeling like you need all the answers.
- Take initiative: Send a text or call—not just immediately, but weeks or months later when other support tends to fade.
- Promote self-care: Gently encourage them to look after their physical and emotional health, and suggest professional support if needed.
- Know your limits: You can't fix their grief. Accept that it's a natural process they must navigate at their own pace, and remember to care for yourself too.

How to Help Yourself

- Be gentle and patient with yourself: These are protective signals, not weakness.
- Try to take good care of your physical body. Eat when and what you can, stay hydrated, rest when you're able, and move your body in ways that feel supportive.
- Small steps help: Journal gently, walk with a friend, or try grounding breaths (inhale 4, hold 7, exhale 8) to feel more steady.
- Express your emotions: Drawing, engaging in creative activities, talking to others, etc. provide opportunities to connect.
- Expect ups and downs: The healing process isn't linear. Some days may feel more manageable than others.
- Reach out for support: It's okay to ask, whether it be someone to talk to or accommodations; friends and campus resources want to help you when you're ready.