

# 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)

**24/7 Lifeline Available: Call 988**

## 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.