

Tufts University Chaplaincy

About Grief and Healing

Grief is the normal, natural reaction process when someone we know and care about dies. It can be like an emotional wound, and it often takes time and attention in order to heal. It is a sign of caring and loving someone who has died.

Mourning is the open expression of thoughts and feelings about someone's death. It is usually an essential part of the healing process for grief.

Grief is a unique experience—unique to the person who died, the circumstances of the death, your support system, and to you. Don't compare forms of grief; just take it one day at a time.

Grief can involve many different types of feelings—surprise, shock, disbelief, confusion, sadness, fear, guilt, anger, numbness, fatigue, and, over time, a growing sense of acceptance.

Suggestions for healing:

- Feel the feelings, embrace them, don't fight them
- Express the feelings—talk, write, journal, create some art, etc.
- Connect and be with friends and loved ones
- Remember and treasure your memories of the person who died
- Rest, eat good food, exercise, and get fresh air
- Ease your expectations of yourself, lighten up your schedule if you can
- Maintain some structure—do things that you enjoy, try to laugh
- Pray or meditate, breathe, and practice mindfulness
- Reach out for professional support—to chaplains, counselors, advisors, etc.
- Create an online tribute or some other tangible memorial
- Send a card or flowers, make a donation to a charity if possible
- Attend the funeral, help to plan a celebration of life service or a tribute

Not suggested:

- Isolating or avoiding others
- Bottling up emotions, ignoring or denying the passing, or pretending to be okay or fine
- Masking feelings with alcohol or other drugs, or other compulsive or risky behaviors
- Criticizing yourself or judging others
- Trying to rush the grief process, trying to do too much

Suggestions for friends:

- Be an active listener, and listen without judging or criticizing. Allow for tears and expressing emotions. Offer your presence and maybe a comforting hug.
- Be compassionate and understanding, be curious and seek to learn.
- Avoid using clichés, such as “I know how you feel,” or “Don't think about it,” etc.
- Be patient, don't rush it, and don't force the process.
- Offer practical help—food, cleaning, errands, helpful chores, an enjoyable activity, etc.
- Attend the funeral or celebration of life, reach out afterwards, send a card, flowers, or a donation to charity, and remember anniversaries.
- Reach out for help for your friend if you are concerned.

Some Support Resources at Tufts:

University Chaplaincy	617-627-3427	chaplaincy.tufts.edu
Counseling and Mental Health Services	617-627-3360	
Dean of Student Affairs Office	617-627-3158	

Academic Deans, Residential Education, Group of Six Centers, Athletics, etc.