Grief and Loss

What To Expect When You Are Grieving A Loss

EXPECT that your life will not be the same as it was before.

EXPECT that it will take you longer to mourn than you would like.

EXPECT that you will not have the same reactions as anyone else.

EXPECT a number of feelings that could include:

- **Grief**: a pure, overwhelming sense of sadness.
- **Anger**: anger at the person for dying; anger or increased irritability in routine situations.
- **Abandonment**: feeling that you have been left by the person, particularly if there was no opportunity to say good-bye.
- **Frustration**: that you couldn’t prevent something from happening.
- **Remorse and guilt**: guilt related to feeling good (even momentarily) if you think you are supposed to continually feel bad.
- **Anxiety/Panic**: that something similar could happen to you, or to a loved one.
- **Confusion**: inability to answer the “big” questions about life and death.
- **Embarrassment**: feeling uncomfortable with your (and others) display of grief; feeling like you are feeling more than you should.
- **Denial**: denial of either the feelings about your loss or about the loss itself.

EXPECT some other adjustment reactions:

- inability to sleep or sleeping too much
- concentration problems
- disinterest in eating, schoolwork, taking care of yourself, and/or other normally pleasurable fun activities
- isolation: thinking that you should (or want to) be able to handle the situation all by yourself

EXPECT that you won’t have all the above feelings and reactions.

EXPECT reactions with reminders of the person: places that held significance, topics of conversation, songs, special dates like birthdays, holidays and anniversaries, including the anniversary of this loss, even smells (like the person’s cologne, for example) can set off a reaction.
How To Help Yourself

Talk to others. Or spend time with someone who understands, not necessarily talking about it, but just secure in the knowledge that they "get it".

Listen to others, remembering that you don't have to always respond with words.

Accept help from others: doing errands, taking notes in class, etc.

Validate your own feelings. They might not be comfortable, but they are normal and expected.

Celebrate their life. Remembering the good times can help present a balanced picture of the person that was.

Celebrate your life. There's nothing like a loss to remind us to live every day to the fullest, to not put off your dreams till a "later" date that we might not get. Dedicate your goal to your friend's or family member's memory. Do it for them as well as yourself.

Contact the Counseling Center

- If you find that your feelings are persisting in ways that are uncomfortable to you.
- If disturbing images are intruding into your waking or dreaming life.
- If your use of alcohol or other drugs has increased since the loss.
- If your reactions are getting in the way of doing what you need to do for school or in relationships.
- If you are concerned about how a friend is reacting.
- If you are feeling depressed and hopeless.

Adapted from the University of Michigan website, [http://www.umich.edu/~caps/e.grief.html](http://www.umich.edu/~caps/e.grief.html)