



Counseling Services

What is Grief?

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) provides the following definition:

Grief is a normal response of sorrow, emotion, and confusion that comes from losing someone or something important to you. It is a natural part of life. Grief is a typical reaction to death, divorce, job loss, a move away from friends and family, or loss of good health due to illness.

What does Grief look like?

Grief is something that we all experience, but that all people experience differently. Reactions like crying, emotional overwhelm, feeling out of control, sadness, anger, tiredness, shock, and stoicism are all normal. Sometimes people feel like they experience the symptoms in waves. The important part of getting through grief is allowing yourself to experience it genuinely, as your heart experiences it. For most, turning to loved ones and others who are trusted is a helpful experience.

Rituals related to and views on death and dying vary across cultures - be mindful of your roots and those of the people around you who have experienced a loss. Those roots may provide a source of healing.

When does Grief end?

There is no one timeline for how long grief lasts. Each person is different. Experts disagree on the exact process that one must go through. SAMHSA suggests that people must (1) Accept the loss; (2) Work through and feel the physical and emotional pain of grief; (3) Adjust to living in a world without the person or item lost; and (4) Move on with life. Many others use Kubler-Ross' (1969) model that suggests people must work through (1) Denial; (2) Anger; (3) Bargaining; (4) Depression; and (5) Acceptance.

It is normal even after working through the process for anniversaries of the loss and other reminders (e.g., a song, a place, a scent) to bring back previously resolved grief.

What should I do?

In addition to reaching out to friends and family who are loved and trusted, Counseling Services is available to help registered students process their emotions and thoughts related to loss.