

Overview of Grief for A&S Chairs – November 14, 2022

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Grief

Grief involves all parts of life – physical, emotional, spiritual, psychological and philosophical.

There are oscillations between regular going on about life and moments of grief.

There is no timeline by which we must grieve, but there are tasks involved:

Realize

Realize what and whom you have lost. Consciously acknowledge the pain of that loss.

How?

- Tell the story of the loss and stories of the persons, relationships, or other that is lost
- Photographs
- Art
- Memorials and grief rituals

Recognize

Recognize and give voice to the significance of the loss—for you, your future, and that of others in your community.

How? Make a list of how you might give the grief a voice. Ideas?

- Journal
- Create art, like memory quilts
- Grief groups, community support gatherings
- Remembrance (consciously think and talk about what the loss means, and what other past losses it may be evoking). New grief almost always awakens other experiences of grief and loss.
- Letters not sent to the object of the loss

Rebuild

Start the tasks of remaking or rebuilding life as it feels now, after the loss.

How might that look for you? Your plan should include physical, psychological and social/emotional elements.

- Physical: Address the grief-related stress with 8-9 hours of sleep a night, movement, food, community and friends (and seek help if you can't do these things)
- Take a break. Allow yourself some breaks from the grief.

- Attend to what would help establish some sense of normal, ordinary life. Do some of your work, socialize, attend to the laundry, grocery shopping, house cleaning aspects of your life. What would this specifically look like for you?
- Engage your community. Talk to friends, family, mentors, spiritual leaders or counselors about what is coming up. It is common to have feelings, fears, memories, thoughts about the impact of the loss, or struggles with how to solve a problem presented by the loss for a while after the event. Not being alone with it helps.
- Develop specific ways to remember and honor the loss while also reinvesting in the now re-shaped present. Mark anniversaries, make rituals, engage in advocacy.
- Make meaning of the loss. What metaphors make connections to the loss and its significance? What words or images express purpose in your life? What are your beliefs about how living beings are connected? About memory? Love?
- Consider advocacy or action groups if that feels appropriate.
- Don't avoid. The only way through grief is through it. Regular life also has to happen. Avoiding – whether through substances or distraction—is a temporary fix, and if used to avoid feelings puts us at risk for depression or other problems.

Grief is an experience that is common to all humans and many animals. Where we attach, where we love, where we identify, we also feel deeply –that goes for communities as well as for individuals.