



WHAT TO EXPECT AND WHAT TO DO WHEN FACED WITH LOSS

Grief reactions are unique to each person and can show up in different ways. In the time following a loss, what you may experience will change as you move through various ways of processing the loss. However, some common reactions include the following:

Emotions

Shock	Disbelief	Anxiety
Anger	Remorse	Numbness
Guilt	Relief	Resentment
Sadness	Helplessness	Regret
Loneliness	Yearning	Irritability
Fear	Confusion	Overwhelmed

Physiological Reactions

Change in sleep	Aches in body
Change in appetite	Dizziness
Low energy	Difficulty breathing
Lowered immunity	Increased heart rate




Behavioral Responses










- Withdrawal
- Increased substance use
- Changes in responsibilities
- Difficulty resting

Cognitive Changes

- Difficulty concentrating
- Disinterest in school or typical activity
- Confusion
- Nightmares
- Greater vigilance to possible threats
- Intrusive images

Amongst all the changes and your grief reaction, some things that may be helpful to remember or practice include:

-  **Do what's right for you.** Go at your own pace. There is no one right to grieve, and you are allowed to feel whatever may come up. Avoid comparing your reactions to those of others.
-  **Seek out social supports and spend time with others.** You may be surprised at the support and shared sense of loss that can be felt with others impacted. Being around others will also mitigate possible feelings of loneliness.
-  **Remember that grief is not linear.** While the stages of grief (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance) provide a helpful framework of understanding what is happening, these stages do not move cleanly from one to the next for many people.

-  **Express and release your emotions (talking, journaling, crying, art).** Intense and varied emotions are normal in the face of loss, and when expressed and directed, these feelings can help process and cope with grief.
-  **Reach out to your faith or spiritual connection.** Being able to make meaning from a loss or connect to a faith-based understanding of what happens after loss can help in accessing supports and processing the loss.
-  **Maintain healthy eating and activity levels.** Continuing to engage in routines to maintain your health is important for giving your body the energy and resources necessary to handle the aftereffects and changes in your life as a result of a loss.
-  **Refrain from judging others' responses.** Recognize that whether you tend to seek active support from others when faced with issues, or tend to consider things on your own, it's important to respect others' perspectives and provide support at a level and in a manner that they desire. Ask others how you can be helpful and what the limits are.
-  **Remind yourself that some things are out of your control.** After a loss, people often try to figure out what they could have done differently or wish that they had done something different. Resist letting this guilt take over, and practice accepting what you cannot change. Practicing self-compassion and understanding can also be helpful in preventing a spiral of remorse.
-  **Practice active listening with others.** Giving others an opportunity to share their experience or vent can be very helpful and healing to both of you, as well as encourage greater connection between yourself and the other person.
-  **Allow joy and humor into your life.** Humor and laughter relieves stress, improves mood, and helps us gain a more balanced perspective. Should it come, allow yourself to laugh and feel joy.
-  **Consider others' assessments of your well-being.** Others close to you may be better able to recognize if you are struggling to cope with this loss. Listen to their concerns and be open to the support they offer.
-  **Seek professional help.** If you are concerned about your grief reaction, would like additional support, or experience suicidal thoughts, seeking counseling can help manage everything you're going through. WSU's Counseling and Prevention Services are available at the Steve Clark YMCA, as part of the Student Wellness Center. Set up an appointment by calling 316-978-4792.

