

# Counseling and Psychological Services

The Official Newsletter of CAPS at Duke Kunshan University

## Coping with Grief and Loss

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### The grieving process

Grieving is a highly individual experience; there's no right or wrong way to grieve. How you grieve depends on many factors, including your personality and coping style, your life experience, your faith, and how significant the loss was to you.

Inevitably, the grieving process takes time. Healing can't be forced or hurried—and there is no “normal” timetable for grieving. Whatever your grief experience, it's important to be patient with yourself and allow the process to naturally unfold.



### Myths and facts about grief and grieving

**Myth:** *The pain will go away faster if you ignore it*

**Fact:** Trying to ignore your pain or keep it from surfacing will only make it worse in the long run. For real healing, it is necessary to face your grief and actively deal with it.

**Myth:** *If you don't cry, it means you aren't sorry about the loss.*

**Fact:** Crying is a normal response to sadness, but it's not the only one. Those who don't cry may feel the pain just as deeply as others. They may simply have other ways of showing it.

**Myth:** *Moving on with your life means forgetting about your loss.*

**Fact:** Moving on means you've accepted your loss—but you can move on with your life and keep the memory of someone or something you lost as an important part of you. These memories can become more and more integral to defining the people we are.





## Tips to deal with the grieving process

- Acknowledge your pain.
- Accept that grief can trigger many different and unexpected emotions.
- Understand that your grieving process will be unique to you.
- Seek out face-to-face support from people who care about you.
- Support yourself emotionally by taking care of yourself physically.
- Recognize the difference between grief and depression.

## Symptoms of grief

### **Shock and disbelief.**

Right after a loss, it can be hard to accept what happened. You may feel numb, have trouble believing that the loss really happened, or even deny the truth.

### **Sadness.**

Profound sadness is probably the most universally experienced symptom of grief. You may have feelings of emptiness, despair, yearning, or deep loneliness. You may also cry a lot or feel emotionally unstable.

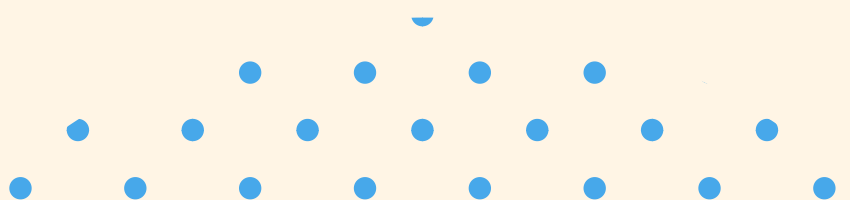


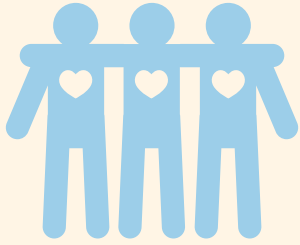
### **Guilt.**

You may regret or feel guilty about things you did or didn't say or do. You may also feel guilty about certain feelings (feeling relieved when a person died after a long, difficult illness, for example). You may even feel guilty for not doing more to prevent your loss, even if it was completely out of your hands.

### **Fear.**

A significant loss can trigger a host of worries and fears. If you've lost your partner, your job, or your home, for example, you may feel anxious, helpless, or insecure about the future. You may even have panic attacks. The death of a loved one can trigger fears about your own mortality, of facing life without that person, or the responsibilities you now face alone.





## Seeking support for grief and loss

**Having face-to-face support of other people is vital to healing from loss.** Even if you're not comfortable talking about your feelings under normal circumstances, it's important to express them when you're grieving.

While sharing your loss can make the burden of grief easier to carry, that doesn't mean that every time you interact with friends and family, you need to talk about your loss. **Comfort can also come from just being around others who care about you. The key is not to isolate yourself.**

### **Accept that many people feel awkward when trying to comfort someone who's grieving.**

Grief can be a confusing, sometimes frightening emotion for many people, especially if they haven't experienced a similar loss themselves. They may feel unsure about how to comfort you and end up saying or doing the wrong things. But don't use that as an excuse to retreat into your shell and avoid social contact. If a friend or loved one reaches out to you, it's because they care.

**Talk to a therapist or grief counselor.** If your grief feels like too much to bear, find a mental health professional with experience in grief counseling. An experienced therapist can help you work through intense emotions and overcome obstacles to your grieving.



#### References:

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/grief/coping-with-grief-and-loss.htm>

#### **On-Campus Resources**

CARE Team: Located in Applications Portal

DKU CAPS: [caps@dukekunshan.edu.cn](mailto:caps@dukekunshan.edu.cn)

DKU Emergency Hotline: 0512-3665-7110

#### **Off-Campus Resources**

Jiangsu Provincial Department of Education (JED) College Student

Hotline: 025-5825-5200 (24/7)

Lifeline Connect Hotline

Free Bilingual Services: 400-821-1215 (10am-10pm)

Content | Chenyi Zhu

Editor | Chenyi Zhu , Siqi Chen

Design | Liew Xiao Theng