

What Do We Need During Loss, Grief & Stress?

TIME Give yourself time alone and time with others whom you trust and who will listen when you need to talk. It can take months and years to understand the feelings that go along with loss.

REST – RELAXATION – EXERCISE – NOURISHMENT – DIVERSION You may need extra amounts of things you needed before. Hot showers, afternoon naps, a trip, a “cause” to work for to help others – any of these may give you a lift. Emotions can be exhausting. You need to replenish yourself. Follow what feels healing to you and what connects you to the people and things you love. Remember to breathe. Try mediation, quiet time or prayer.

REACH OUT/CARING Try to allow yourself to accept the expressions of caring from others even though they may be uneasy and awkward. Helping a friend or relative also suffering the same loss may bring a feeling of closeness with that person. Reach out to people; they do care. Call home or friends from the past.

HOPE You may find hope and comfort from those who have experienced a similar loss. Knowing some things that helped them, and realizing that they have recovered and time does help may give you hope that sometime in the future your pain and confusion will be less raw and painful. It’s normal to re-prioritize, to question your belief system. Don’t be afraid to talk with a professional about these things. Notice what is going well and attend to the things that are good in your life.

GOALS For a while, it may seem that much of life is without meaning. At times like these, small goals are helpful. Be concrete. Get out of bed. Take a shower. Eat meals with friends. Plan fun things to balance your school work. Try to find something you enjoy each day. Living one day at a time can be your rule of thumb.

SMALL PLEASURES Do not underestimate the healing effects of small pleasures as you are ready. Sunsets, a walk in the woods, a favorite food – all are small steps toward regaining your pleasure in life itself. Moments of joy, laughter and fun are very important. It is not disrespectful after a death or a crisis.

DECISIONS Do not make any major life decisions or changes for awhile.

PERMISSION TO BACKSLIDE Sometimes after a period of feeling good, we find ourselves back in the old feelings of extreme sadness, despair, or anger. This is often the nature of grief, working through things and up and down, and it may happen over and over for a time. It happens because we cannot take in all of the pain and confusion at once. So we let it in a little at a time.

EXERCISE Alternate periods of strenuous physical exercise and relaxation in order to alleviate some of your body’s physical reactions to stress.

STAY SOBER Do not try to numb the pain with drugs or alcohol. Alcohol, especially, acts as a depressant and may further complicate your sense of emotional wellbeing.

CREDIT Give yourself credit for little victories and small steps.

Typical Experiences During Grief

Emptiness
Disorientation
Indecisiveness
Disorganization
Vulnerability
Anxiety
Change in sleep patterns
Questioning of belief system
Change in appetite
Extreme loneliness
Increased irritability
Inability to concentrate
Panicky thoughts
Loss of interest in life
Relief
Anger
Guilt
Depression
Helplessness

*Adapted by the Center for Religion,
Spirituality and Social Justice,
1234 Park Street, x4981 from
https://hospicenet.org/html/grief_needs.html*

STRESS Try to reduce or find help for stresses in your life. Getting back into or creating a routine helps. You may need to allow yourself to do things at your own pace. Realize that others are also under stress. Also realize that everyone shows this differently – there are regional, cultural differences in response to stress, loss and grief.

HAVE PATIENCE WITH YOURSELF Accept the slowness of the process. Do not label yourself as “crazy” or “weak”, especially if you seek help.

ACADEMICS Accept the fact that some things may have to slide. If you find that you are struggling academically, call Academic Advising, x3702.

HELP Tell others how they may support you. Accept that they won’t always speak or act appropriately according to your expectations.

Grinnell is an academically demanding place. The ability to think clearly and accomplish a lot of work can be impaired by loss of sleep, loss of appetite or improper nourishment, over-use of alcohol/drugs, and emotional turmoil. It’s time to seek professional assistance when any of these things begin getting in your way. If you are feeling overwhelmed for more than a few days, call one of the resources listed below:

- Your SA and RLC
- Chaplains – x4981
- Academic Advising – x3702
- Poweshiek County Mental Health Center – 641-236-6137
- Health Center – x3230

Continue to use all of your other personal sources of support, too.