



# Guide to Grief and Loss

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This package was created by Healthy U: Peer Health & Wellness at the University of Manitoba. We are a group of trained, non-judgmental, and confidential student health and wellness leaders on campus.

We provide outreach activities, workshops, and one-on-one support for our fellow students on a variety of health and well-being topics. Feel free to drop in to chat or pick up more information packages.

If you would like to request or attend one of our workshops or events, check out our website for details.



# What is grief and why does it happen?

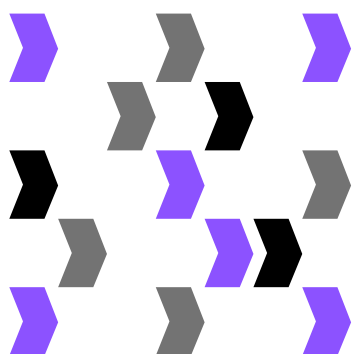
Grief is your body's way of **responding to loss**. You can experience grief through a variety of different situations, like but not limited to:

- Job loss;
- Breakups with a partner;
- The death of a loved one
- Loss of a friend
- Loss of financial security
- Graduation
- Death of a pet

## What does it feel like?

Keep in mind that understanding your journey through grief can be a difficult one and you may find yourself reacting in different ways.

- Feeling sad, angry, anxious, in shock, in denial or regretful.
- Changes in sleep and eating patterns, fatigue or increase minor illnesses such as head aches, stomach aches or sore back.
- Forgetfulness, poor concentration, or disorientation.
- Needing more time off work.
- If someone has died, spending your time yearning for the person who has died or thinking about their death.



It's okay to feel like you're not reacting to loss in a "normal" way too. Remember that there is no right or wrong way to react to loss and what is considered "normal" can change daily.

# How can I cope with the loss I'm experiencing?

When you experience a loss, it's common to feel like you want to avoid it because the feelings that come with grief are hard to tackle.

In light of this, avoiding your grief and trying to "get over it fast" can do more harm than good.



Your grief is unique to you and can take different amounts of time because we all grieve in our own way. Here are some things you can try to help you along the way...

- **Accept the reality of the loss.** Some may try to protect themselves by denying the loss, but accepting it can make the process easier for you.
- **Take on the task of acknowledging personal growth.** When experiencing loss, it's possible to discover new things about yourself.
- **Set reasonable expectations.** Setting boundaries for yourself is important because you'll need to recognize the emotional energy that it takes to grieve. Asking others for help, making realistic plans for yourself or setting priorities are some ways you can take care of yourself.

# Someone close to me just died, how can I memorialize them?

Making the time to remember the person who died is healthy and promotes positive grieving. It can help you recognize the importance that person had on your life (and still does), recognize the difficult times and can help build your life around the loss.



You can try looking over old **photo albums or collections** to celebrate the memories, start your own **scrap book** dedicated to the person who died, create a **memory box** filled with items that remind you of the person who died, or you could **arrange a ceremony** that fits your culture or religion.

# Someone I know is grieving, how can I help?

If you have a friend or loved one experiencing a loss, it can be difficult to figure out what to say or how to help them. The following may help you have that difficult and emotional conversation...

- **Ask Questions.** You can connect with someone easier by showing curiosity and concern for their wellbeing. Asking things like, "how are things going for you?". or "how can I help you through this?" are some examples.
- **Respect their experience.** If you have experienced a loss before and recognized that you coped a different way than them, make sure you keep in mind that they're doing what they think is best for them, even if it wasn't something you would do to cope.
- **Stay present in the moment.** Make eye contact and show them that you're listening and that you care.
- **Get consent before you offer advice or strategies for coping.** Sometimes, this can overstep boundaries. Sometimes all your friend/family member needs is a listening ear.



# Creating a Memory Box

Making a memory box can allow you to keep special items that remind you of the person who died. You can keep it to yourself in a safe place, or share it with your friends and family.

- First, **find a box that interests you**. It can be any size, shape or colour.
- Second, **decorate your box**. You can make it your own or follow a theme that reminds you of your loved one. Covering the box with construction paper of your choice, stickers or even photos of the person who died can make it unique to you.
- Lastly, **find items to place in your box**. Photos, jewelry, or items that remind you of the person who died are a few examples.









# Resources

## On Campus

### **Student Counselling Centre (SCC)\***

474 University Centre, open Monday - Friday, 8:30 - 4:30

Offers groups and workshops and individual counselling.

<http://umanitoba.ca/student-supports/counselling-resources-students>

### **Spiritual Care\***

102C University Centre, open Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, 8:30 - 4:30

Offers a supportive presence to students who are searching for a meaning, identity, or purpose in the face of suffering, loss or illness.

<http://umanitoba.ca/student/spiritual-care/spiritual-care-coordinator.html>

## Off Campus

### **Palliative Manitoba**

2109 Portage Avenue, open Monday - Friday, 8:00 - 4:00

(204)889-8525

[www.palliativemanitoba.ca](http://www.palliativemanitoba.ca)

Provides support groups, grief seminars, and a telephone bereavement program to individuals who had experienced the loss of a loved one.

### **The Compassionate Friends of Winnipeg**

[www.tcfwinnipeg.org](http://www.tcfwinnipeg.org)

Provides a peer support group for families who are grieving the loss of a child of any age from any cause. Note: this is a non-profit organization run by peers, there are no professionals available for consultation. If you are struggling and require professional supports, refer to the previous resources.

\*There are no in-person services at the University of Manitoba currently. Check the relevant websites for remote services and updates.

## Online

### **Living My Culture (Created by Canadian Virtual Hospice)**

[www.livingmyculture.ca](http://www.livingmyculture.ca)

Provides education and insight on various cultures and their views and practices on the topics of death, dying, grief and bereavement.

### **My Grief (Created by Canadian Virtual Hospice)**

[www.mygrief.ca](http://www.mygrief.ca)

Provides education and self-help e-books that people who are grieving may use during their journey of bereavement. This can be done at your own pace in the comfort of your own private space or home.