



Coping with Loss

Tragedies disrupt our sense of what is normal and often leave us uncertain about how to move forward.

Recognize unhelpful reactions to loss and tragedy and engage in healthy actions that will help you gain strength and healing.

Intense emotions are normal and healthy.

Emotions do not imply weakness or craziness. Powerful feelings of anger, sadness, fear, helplessness, disbelief, numbness, or confusion may be a part of your emotional landscape for some time. Often, difficult feelings can be an important reminder of the significance and meaning of relationships and values we hold dear. If they are appropriately expressed and directed, such feelings will provide you with the passion and energy necessary to effectively cope with the loss.

People deal with emotions differently.

Some people may become overwhelmed with emotions while others appear quieter and more reserved. Avoid comparing your reactions to those of others, and allow yourself the freedom to feel what you do. Show respect for others' perspectives, and provide support at a level and in the manner that they desire. Ask others about how you can be helpful and what the limits are.

Be a good listener.

If you are trying to help a friend, listen attentively. Saying the "right thing" isn't nearly as important as expressing your desire to support your friend, being fully present, and actively listening to them.

Spend time with people who care about and will listen to you, and ask them for support.

While it can feel intimidating at first, speaking to others about your reactions and feelings like sadness or anger can help. Finding those who have shared your experience can help you feel less different or alone. Look for sources of support in your immediate relationships, including friends, family, partners, professors, advisors, or mental health professionals.

Get back to your daily routine.

Do the things you would normally do even if you don't feel like it. It's a good way to regain a sense of control and help you feel less anxious or overwhelmed.

Take care of yourself, and find balance.

Eat well-balanced meals, get sufficient rest, and keep daily physical activity a high priority. Avoid excessive use of substances. Balance this care with time for yourself and personal needs as well as the needs of those around you. It is easy to become obsessed with thinking about your loss. Balance this with thinking of people and events that are meaningful, comforting, and encouraging and that lead to positive action.

