

Coping with the Loss of a Friend, Co-worker or Loved One

The loss of a friend or loved one can trigger many complicated emotions. Often, hearing news of a loss suddenly can be shocking, painful, or unexpected. The feelings that result can be intense and confusing. We at Fordham's Counseling and Psychological Services can help you cope with losses you have experienced. We provide walk-in appointments for students in the aftermath of trauma, individual counseling, bereavement groups that are often run on both campuses, and consultation to faculty and administrators working with affected students.

What can you expect?

Although grief is a normal and common experience, each individual reacts in his or her own unique way. Each person also grieves at his or her own pace; there is no set rhythm or timeline for healing. At first, you may find you have trouble sleeping, eating, concentrating, or even remembering simple tasks. You may feel the world is a more unpredictable place today than it was yesterday. Or, you may feel unaffected by the news altogether. Remember that it is **OKAY** to feel exactly how you are feeling. *If the loss is too painful or unbearable, or has affected you in ways that confuse or upset you or someone close to you, then we encourage you to seek help.* The professional staff at Fordham's counseling center and the Dean of Students are available to assist you.

Common Reactions to Loss:

- Changes in sleep, energy, or appetite
- Restlessness or anxiety
- Tightness in chest or feeling a pit in stomach
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Forgetfulness or feeling disoriented
- Crying or sadness
- Preoccupation
- Withdrawal from friends
- Shock or disbelief
- Numbness
- Guilt or feelings of regret

- Loneliness
- Feeling of being lost
- Anger
- Re-evaluation of beliefs
- Distance/closeness with God
- Difficulty attending place of worship
- Overwhelmed with emotion

What you can do about it:

- Allow yourself to feel all of your feelings, both positive and negative, and share your experiences with someone you trust
- Remember that you are not alone; others can relate to your feelings of grief
- Reach out to family and friends. You may need to take the initiative to talk about the death, share the story of your loss, and ask for their support
- Spend 10-15 minutes writing your thoughts in a journal
- Think about things you are looking forward to
- Remind yourself of people and events which are meaningful, even comforting, to you
- Take care of yourself. Avoid alcohol and drugs, as they can intensify emotions
- Help others or do something productive
- Take a break! Being overexposed can increase your stress
- If the grief is overwhelming, or you want to talk to someone in confidence, seek professional help.