

# PLU Counseling Center

## Office Hours:

Monday - Friday  
8:00-noon, 1pm-5pm

## Services:

- Individual short-term counseling
- Group workshops
- Psychiatry Services

## PLU COUNSELING, HEALTH AND WELLNESS SERVICES

Counseling Center  
12180 Park Avenue South  
Tacoma, WA 98447

253-535-7206

[counseling@plu.edu](mailto:counseling@plu.edu)

[www.plu.edu/chws](http://www.plu.edu/chws)



# Working Through Grief

## GRIEF IS A NATURAL AND NORMAL REACTION TO LOSS.

Grief can bring a wide range of emotions: From numbness to deep sadness or anger. It is difficult to predict how you or another person will respond to a death or a traumatic event. How you grieve may depend on many factors, including life experience, culture, faith and personality. There is not a “right” or “wrong” way to grieve. It is important to allow yourself permission to respond in your own way. There are many healthy ways to cope with grief and resources if you need them.

### Common grief reactions:

Here are some common feelings and responses that you may experience. Often, reactions may come and go in the grieving process.

#### *Shock and Disbelief*

This is a typical first reaction after learning of a loss. It's nature's way of protecting you from the impact of the loss for a while. You may:

- Have trouble believing the individual is gone.
- Feel numb or like you're on “auto-pilot.”
- Have a sense of being in a dream.

#### *Anger or Resentment*

This is common, even if there is no one to blame for the death. You may:

- Feel like a great injustice has been done.
- Be angry at doctors, teachers, friends, relatives and others.
- Resent the individual for leaving you.

#### *Guilt*

It's normal to regret things you did or didn't say, do or feel. Some people may regret or feel guilty for:

- Not doing something (or not doing more) to prevent the death.
- Not saying goodbye.
- Having arguments with the individual while he or she was alive.

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## **Fear**

A death can cause you to feel worried, panicky or helpless. You may:

- Feel unable to handle new responsibilities.
- Worry that you're losing your mind.
- Have fears about your own death or others close to you.
- Have difficulty concentrating and making decisions.

## **Deep Sadness**

Sadness may be a constant presence or hit you in waves. It's common to feel:

- Lonely, like there's a hole in the center of your life.
- A deep yearning, like you are reliving all the sadness you've ever had in your life.

## **Physical Problems**

Grief can cause a variety of physical symptoms, including:

- Headache and extreme tiredness.
- Upset stomach and loss of appetite.

## **Coping with grief can bring hope and personal growth.**

In time, the future begins to look hopeful, even though you may still ache for your loss. Working through your grief may give you new strengths and insights. You may find it helpful to:

- Reach out to people that you trust.
- Keep a journal to express your thoughts and feelings.

- Practice good nutrition and regular exercise.
- Rest your body and mind with relaxation and good sleep.

## **Know when to ask for help.**

Seeking support is not a sign of weakness; it's a sign that you are taking responsibility for your recovery.

## **Get help if:**

- You want to make sure your grief responses are normal.
- Your grief feels like it's too much to bear.
- Your grief is causing problems at school, work, in a relationship or in other areas of your life.
- You feel "stuck" as if the sadness and anger is not going away.
- You use -- or feel the urge to use -- alcohol or other drugs to cope with your pain.
- You begin withdrawing from family and friends.
- For additional help, you can contact the Counseling Center 253-535-7206 located at AUC 300 or the PLU Crisis Line at 253-535-7075.
- Please seek immediate help if you or someone you know is feeling that life isn't worth living or if you are having thoughts of harming yourself or others. You can also contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or [SuicidePreventionLifeline.org](http://SuicidePreventionLifeline.org).

