

Dealing with Personal Grief after a Critical Incident

When you have suffered a loss, such as a death, divorce, or a violation of one's own personal safety, you may wonder how you can carry on in such pain. How can you get through the day? It helps to remember that grieving is a process. In time, we can each learn coping mechanisms that will help us live with the reality of the loss we feel.

Listed below are some of the most common physiological, emotional, psychological, and behavioral responses to unexpected traumatic life events. Using the tips that foster resiliency in the right-hand column will aide in your return to a state of well-being and renew your sense of purpose.

3 Common Stages of Grief

Shock and Disbelief

- Occurs after the announcement of the event. You may feel disconnected from what is happening, and it may not feel real.

Sadness

- You may mourn the loss of the connection/relationship you had with the individual.
- This loss may also bring back feelings associated with previous losses.

Integration

- Means exploring new options, coming up with a plan of action and mobilizing resources. This does not mean that sadness goes away, there may still be things that bring back the sense of sadness and that is okay.

Tips to Foster Resilience

- Understand that grief is a healthy, unique, and normal response to loss.
- Let yourself fully experience the range of emotions: sorrow, anguish, guilt, betrayal, anxiety, numbness, confusion, shock, relief, shame, and joy.
- To integrate grief, the positive and negative aspects of the relationship may be re-visited.
- Share your grief. Talk about your feelings to someone you trust.
- Care for yourself by eating well, exercising, and resting when needed.
- When a friend or loved one is grieving, the best thing you can do is be available to listen.
- Understand that each person has their own way of grieving. Allow the person to grieve in their own way while letting them know you are available to help them heal.
- Sometimes people get stuck in one stage of grief and cannot seem to get past it.
Professionals at your IMPACT Student Life Assistance Program are available 24 hours a day to help you through this difficult time. Please contact us at 866-780-0855 for assistance.