

Questions about Grief and Stress

WHAT EMOTIONS ARE NORMAL IN GRIEVING?

- **Grief can be experienced differently** from one person to the next. As such, there is no right or wrong way to grieve. You may experience a wide array of emotions, ranging from shock, disbelief, denial, anger, panic, anxiety, distress, blame, and sadness; it can also affect other areas of your functioning such as experiencing decreased concentration and energy, social isolation, irritability, and feeling overwhelmed.
- **It is important to acknowledge, hold space for, and process these emotions** in a way that feels comfortable and safe to you. You can create space for these emotions by verbally expressing them, journaling, crafting, drawing, moving your body (i.e., exercising, dancing, yoga), or seeking professional support.
- **It may be helpful to reach out for social support** from individuals you trust whether it be family members, friends, therapists, religious figures, or other trusted people in your life.

WHAT IS GRIEF VS. GRIEVING?

- **Grief is a normal human reaction to loss and death** and it can be experienced as a painful emotional state. When we experience a loss, whether it is a loved one, loss of a relationship, job, etc. it may feel like we have lost a part of ourselves.
- **Grieving is a process of adjustment**, where you have to slowly learn to rebuild your life around the loss you have experienced. Grieving can feel like being knocked off by a big wave while surfing, it can be disorienting and scary. Eventually, with time and learning different ways to navigate it, you learn how to maneuver this big, scary wave—and it becomes less scary.
- **Learning to ride the waves of grief can make this process a little bit less intense.** While the emotions you may experience at the beginning might feel overwhelming, reminding yourself that grief is a normal experience and it is okay to experience these emotions, can help normalize the big emotions you might feel. Telling yourself “I know what I am feeling is okay, this state will not last forever. I just have to ride through this” can help remind yourself about the transient nature of grief.

HOW TO SUPPORT SOMEONE WHO IS GRIEVING?

- **When you notice someone going through the grieving process**, it is important to hold space for them. You can do this by listening to them, normalizing what they are feeling, and providing support in a way that you can.
- **By being there for them and supporting them through this process**, you are communicating to them that they are not alone.
- **It is okay if you are unable to make someone feel better** while they are grieving; do not pressurize them to “get over their grief.”
- **It is okay to ask them how they would like you to support them.**