

Coping With Grief & Loss

In times of crisis, we may be faced with profound losses. As health care professionals, we face loss more frequently than many others in the public at large.

Grief is the natural reaction to loss. It's a highly personal and individual experience. Everyone grieves a little differently, and there's no "right" way to go about it.

Both the experience and the expression of grief can be influenced by many factors, including but not limited to one's belief system/faith/spiritual practice, prior experiences with loss, the level of personal connection with the loss, cultural background and access to support.

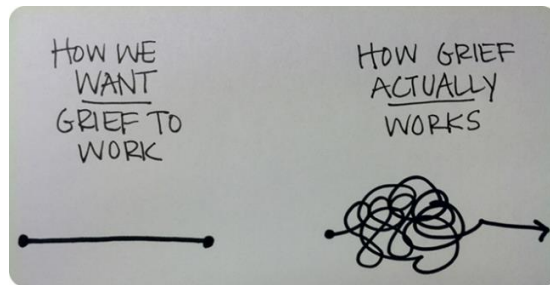
Loss isn't just about end of life. We also face loss when having to adapt to changing circumstances. Right now, many of us are also grieving the loss of a predictable schedule, loss of routine, loss of social outlets and planned recreation, and loss of connection with family and friends who are not experiencing the "front lines" stress of managing the COVID-19 threat.

While no two people experience grief exactly the same way, there are some common myths that can make moving through your grieving process more difficult:

- **Myth 1: The pain will dissipate faster if I ignore it.**
 - **Fact:** Ignoring pain only makes it grow. Much like the experience of ignoring a toddler who's trying to get your attention, the longer you go without acknowledging it, the louder and more persistent it becomes. Acknowledging it and talking about it really does help.
- **Myth 2: Stoicism will prove that I'm staying strong.**
 - **Fact:** Authenticity requires strength and courage. You can feel and move through your emotions in a way that leads to healing and growth—not just for you, but for others who may be searching for the courage to let others know how they're feeling too. Sharing in loss makes the burden easier to carry for everybody.
- **Myth 3: If I don't cry about it, it means the loss wasn't that important.**
 - **Fact:** Many people experience emotional numbing in response to loss—especially initially. Some others may experience guilt, anger, anxiety or fear.
 - It's also important to recognize that your first reaction is not always your final reaction. You may experience a variety of feelings and responses as part of your grieving process.

- **Myth 4: Grief has a set time limit.**

- **Fact:**



Accessing the right support is key to being able to grieve losses in a healthy way. If you've experienced loss and you'd like to access support from a kind, non-judgmental, listening ear, contact the following resources:

Ohio State Stress, Trauma and Resilience (STAR) Line: (614) 293-STAR (7827)

This line is staffed 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday. If you're calling outside of these hours, please leave a message with your name and number or preferred contact method, and we'll respond within 24 hours.

Ohio State University Department of Chaplaincy:

Department of Chaplaincy Medical Center - **614-293-8791** or **3-8791**, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily
Department of Chaplaincy East Hospital - **614-257-3255** or **7-3255** from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily
During any other time, call the hospital operator at **614-293-8000** or **3-8000**