

Self-Care During Grief for College Students

What to Know About Grief

Grief affects people differently. There is no “right” way to grieve and no set timeline. You may notice emotional, physical, cognitive, or behavioral changes — all can be normal responses to loss. Some days may feel manageable, while others feel unexpectedly heavy.

Common Reactions You Might Notice

- Feeling sad, numb, angry, anxious, or disconnected
- Trouble concentrating or remembering things
- Changes in sleep, appetite, or energy
- Wanting more space from others — or more connection
- Feeling pressure to “be okay” or get back to normal

Self-Care That Can Help

- Keep basic routines when possible (sleep, meals, hygiene)
- Take breaks from schoolwork or social media when needed
- Move your body gently (walking, stretching, fresh air)
- Express feelings through writing, music, art, or talking
- Give yourself permission to rest without guilt

Social & Emotional Support

- Spend time with people who feel safe and understanding
- Let others help in small, practical ways
- You don’t need to explain your grief to everyone
- It’s okay to set boundaries around questions or conversations

When Grief Intersects with School

- Concentration and motivation may be affected
- Reaching out early to professors or advisors can help
- Asking for support is a strength — not a failure

When to Reach Out for Extra Support

- Ongoing trouble sleeping or functioning
- Feeling overwhelmed most days
- Withdrawing completely from others
- Increase in substance use or abuse
- Thoughts of harming yourself or feeling hopeless

A Gentle Reminder

- Grief changes over time. You do not need to have it figured out.
- Taking care of yourself is not forgetting — it is surviving.
- You deserve support while you grieve.

Please reach out to Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) for support. CAPS services are free to all students, and same-day appointments are available if needed.

You can call 805-437-2088 or email caps@csuci.edu for assistance.

Online Resources:

Actively Moving Forward - <http://activelymovingforward.org/> - an organization specifically designed for grieving college students.

Grief.com - <https://grief.com/> - Tender hearts online support groups

GriefShare - <https://www.griefshare.org/healing> - local ongoing drop in support groups.

The Dinner Party – <https://www.thedinnerparty.org/> A platform that helps grieving people find peer community.

Books:

We Get It: Voices of Grieving College Students and Young Adults: by Healthier Servaty-Seib and David Fajgenbaum

Living With Grief After Sudden Loss By Kenneth Doka

I Wasn't Ready To Say Goodbye: Surviving, Coping & Healing after the Sudden Death of a Loved One By: Brook Noel and Pamela D. Blair, Ph.D.

Healing After Loss: Daily Meditations for Working Through Grief By: Martha Whitmore Hickman