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## WHAT IS GRIEF?

Grief is the feelings associated with a loss; usually the death of a loved one but grief can extend to loss of a home, pet, and anticipated event.

## GRIEF SYMPTOMS

Grief symptoms have physical, cognitive, behavioral/social, and cultural components.

### PHYSICAL

exhaustion, feeling tired or sick, headaches, increases inflammation, dry mouth, and pain. Some people experience lack of sleep or a lack or increase in appetite.

People who are grieving can experience pain because when we are grieving our bodies produce extra amounts of stress hormones that shock muscles and joints. Increased inflammation worsens pain associated with inflammatory diseases.

### COGNITIVE

overthinking, brain fog, disbelief, dissociation, poor memory, or disorganized thoughts.

### BEHAVIORAL/SOCIAL

social withdrawal, crying, avoidance of reminders of the loss, becoming dependent on others

### CULTURAL

Every culture experiences grief in a different way. Many times, supports come from a person's social and cultural community and spiritual norms dictate how people make meaning out of the loss. For instance, some cultures celebrate the life of the deceased while others mourn for a week.

## EMOTIONS

Emotions associated with grief: anger, anxiety, sadness, and relief

## WHEN SHOULD YOU GET HELP?

- If a person is experiencing suicidal thoughts
- Neglecting personal hygiene
- Sustained changes in appetite, sleeping, mood.
- If you are concerned because you notice significant changes, reach out.

## HOW TO HELP ON THE FIELD

- Respect the players process of grieving; we all grieve in different ways
- Avoid giving advice; be a good listener; acknowledge the pain
- Understand that grief comes and goes; be prepared for mood swings
- Do not try to explain the loss for example “they’re not suffering anymore”
- Talk about the deceased or the loss and the emotions associated.
- Run any idea of how you want to acknowledge the death of their loved one by the player and their family; plant a tree, hold a benefit, areas of advocacy so they feel more grounded.
- Tangible help is the best; Create a meal chain or gift card collection

## RESOURCES

### **National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement**

The National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement (NCSCB) at the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work is dedicated to supporting students through crisis and loss.

### **Bo's Place**

Bo's Place connects families, educators, and professionals with resources for assisting anyone who has lost someone in their life.

### **Coalition to Support Grieving Students**

Videos and downloadable grief-support modules for school professionals on conversation and support, developmental and cultural considerations, practical considerations, reactions and triggers, professional preparation and self-care, and crisis and special circumstances are available on the Coalition to Support Grieving Students' website.

### **National Alliance for Grieving Children Opens**

The National Alliance for Grieving Children's website provides a network for nationwide communication between hundreds of professionals and volunteers who want to share ideas, information and resources with each other to better support the grieving children and families they serve in their own communities.

### **National Association of School Psychologists: Addressing Grief**

Information and resources for schools and families following the loss of a loved one, or during times of significant life changes, is available on the National Association of School Psychologists website.

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