**Grief and Bereavement**

Do not be afraid to seek professional help if you need it. While a death usually disrupts the ability of the mourner to carry on daily activities, any crippling loss in ability to function may indicate the need for professional assistance. Schedule an appointment with CAPS at (321) 674-8050 or an off-campus site.

**Florida Institute of Technology**

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) is the on-campus counseling center open to all enrolled students of Florida Tech. The center’s mission is to support and enhance the academic, vocational and emotional health of Florida Tech students by offering professional mental health assistance, outreach and consultation, education and training. CAPS also strives to be vitally involved throughout the university in developing and nurturing a healthy campus learning environment in which students can reach their personal, interpersonal and professional goals. Additional information about CAPS services and other resources is available at www.fit.edu/caps. Please call or walk in to the center to make an appointment.

**Center Hours**

Monday–Thursday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m.
Friday, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.

**Location**

Intersection of Country Club Road and University Boulevard, west of Babcock Street

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**What can be done to aid healing?**

1. Understand your reaction is normal. You are not going crazy.
2. Take time to feel and heal. Build in quiet time to be alone and undistracted. Privately writing about our experiences and observations at moments of transition can contribute to a sense of release and understanding.
3. Be patient with yourself. If you find yourself unable to do everything you normally can do, elicit help from others.
4. Find healthy ways to relieve stress. Transitions of any kind are stressful. Maintain a balanced diet, exercise and rest.
5. Make sense of your loss. Rather than trying to push thoughts of your loss from your mind, allow yourself to come to grips with the situation. Trying to banish painful images only gives them greater power. As you construct a coherent story of your experience, it will fall into greater perspective.
6. Cry if you need to.
7. Confide in someone. Burdens shared are not as heavy. Accept the caring gestures and listening ears of others graciously, recognizing that your turn to reciprocate will come.
8. Let go of the need to control others. Other people affected by the loss will grieve it in their own way and in their own time. Do not force them to conform to your particular pathway of mourning.
9. Ritualize the loss in a personally significant way. Find creative ways to memorialize losses that fit the person you are and the transition you have undergone.
10. Allow yourself to change. Losses of people and roles central to our lives change us. Embrace these changes and find those opportunities that exist for growth.
11. Harvest the legacy of the loss. Reevaluate your life priorities, and search for opportunities to apply what the loss has taught you in future projects and relationships.
12. Try to maintain activities in your daily life, such as attending class, spending time with friends/family and taking care of yourself.
13. Avoid using substances, such as alcohol or illegal drugs.

You may also want to visit the following websites:

- www.helpguide.org/topics/grief.htm
- www.griefshare.org
- www.webmd.com/mental-health/mental-health-coping-with-grief
- www.samhsa.gov/MentalHealth/Anxiety_Grief.pdf

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**Grief is the process of moving from losing what we have, to having what we’ve lost.**

—Stephen Fleming

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**Florida Institute of Technology**

Counseling and Psychological Services
Many young adults in college find themselves facing loss. Loss comes in many forms and can be difficult. Although loss is a universal experience, there is considerable variety in how people grieve. Grief is the intense sorrow or great sadness one feels, especially as a result of a death. Bereavement is the period of grief and mourning after a death.

Common Reactions to Loss:

- Shock
- Anger
- Sadness
- Guilt
- Anxiety
- Loneliness
- Despair
- Regret
- Fatigue

- Loss of motivation
- Loss of pleasure in things that were once enjoyable
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Changes in appetite
- Confusion
- Loss of concentration
- Isolation/withdrawal

Loss is a powerful stressor in life. Depending on prior losses and on the particulars of the current loss, many are likely to experience symptoms of anxiety and depression, and some even undergo physiological changes, which can reduce the body’s ability to fight off disease. There is often a sense of unreality associated with first becoming aware of the loss. The griever may refuse to believe it has happened and feel out of contact with those around him or her. Many people feel guilt because they do not initially feel any pain about the loss, or they feel they could have done more for the person lost. The numbness and sense of unreality may be replaced later with a sense of profound anxiety or sadness. This time may be marked by repeatedly seeking the person who has died, possibly even briefly hearing or seeing the deceased. As the loss becomes “real,” grievers often experience mood swings, in particular overwhelming waves of sadness and sometimes anger that comes suddenly with reminders of the loss.

Misconceptions about Grieving:

According to The Lessons of Loss: A Guide to Coping, by Robert A. Neimeyer, Ph.D, some misconceptions about grieving include the following:

Six months should be enough time for someone to grieve. Many people do not have a realistic expectation of how long grieving should last. Grieving is a much longer process than most people think, so it is important to give yourself time to grieve your loss.

The intensity and length of your grief are testimony to your love for the deceased. Although some people grieve for quite a while, some people are able to resume their normal activities and recover emotionally in a relatively short amount of time. Others may find they are unable to cry. This does not mean they loved the deceased person any less. Therefore, it is important to remember there is a full range of grief reactions and everyone grieves in their own way.

It is not OK to show your emotions over a loss. Your feelings are completely natural. It is absolutely fine to cry, or to feel angry, anxious or lonely. It may also be helpful to share your feelings and experiences of grief with a trusted friend or family member.

What does recovery from grieving look like?

For years it was thought that bereavement occurred in a steady and orderly progression of stages. However, it is now felt that grief is experienced in highly individualized ways.

Immediate Aftermath

In the immediate aftermath of a loss, we typically experience extreme disorganization in our thoughts, feelings and behaviors. However, protected somewhat by the shock and numbness we may experience, we often seem to regroup in the days that follow. During these earliest days of bereavement, we are also comforted by the intensive social support that often accompanies community and family awareness of the loss up to, during and shortly after the funeral.

Weeks Following the Loss

We may experience greater disorientation and depression in the weeks following the loss. It is at this time that reaching out to clergy, family or friends, counselors or other professionals for help is important.

Goal of Recovery

The goal of recovery is not to forget the memories of your loss or to completely stop feeling pain when you think of the person. The goal is to be able to invest your time, attention and emotions on other parts of your life so you can resume more “normal” functioning again.