



A FACULTY/STAFF GUIDE FOR GRIEF AND LOSS

Suggestions for Facilitating Classroom Discussions Following a Loss



As educators, one of our fundamental goals is to help students learn from their experiences. In the current situation, those experiences involve loss. The faculty and staff of WSU are coping with our own reactions, and we also care about the welfare and well-being of the students with whom we interact.

In the wake of a loss, it is often helpful to provide students with an opportunity to discuss their experience of it. Allowing students to talk about their experience with a trusted faculty member is one of the best ways to reestablish a sense of security, feel supported, and to help students cope with their stress and grief. Here are some suggestions to achieve those goals:



You may want to set aside time in class to discuss the loss and the students' thoughts and feelings. Doing so will normalize students' experiences and generally help students to be better able to return to the academic work at hand. Opportunities for this supportive processing of the event should happen as soon as possible after the loss occurs.



Let students know that each person will have an opportunity to talk but that no one will be required to participate. If students choose not to speak, remind them of your office hours, email address, and/or willingness to meet one-on-one.



Ask that students only speak for themselves, as everyone has a unique perspective on what has happened. Remind students that the focus will be on support, not judgment.



Emphasize that talking about the loss at their own personal pace can be a good and healing thing to do. You may want to share some of your feelings, as this may encourage students to talk. For example, you might say: "I'm still (sad, shaken, upset) by the loss that occurred on _____/the loss of _____. I'm glad to be with all of you again. How are each of you (feeling, doing, coping) with this?"



It is important to remember that the class discussion is about the expression of thoughts and feelings. Faculty may respond to students' statements with reflective comments such as:

- "I can hear how much _____ meant to you."
- "It sounds like this loss really impacted you..."
- "It makes sense to be feeling so many emotions right now."



After a loss, students often question themselves for feeling the way they do. It is helpful to provide reassurance that their feelings are normal reactions to an abnormal situation. Finding out that their fellow students are having some of the same reactions can also be a great relief.



When the students finish talking, a moment of silence might be helpful. If you are worried about a particular student, approach them privately.



Let students know that Counseling and Prevention Services can also provide support to students. CAPS is located in the Student Wellness Center inside the Steve Clark YMCA. Contact us at 316-978-4SWC (4792) or our website, wichita.edu/CAPS.

If you would like to consult with a member of the CAPS staff about how to lead a classroom discussion, please contact CAPS at 316-978-4SWC (4792).



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