

## Coping with Difficult Events (for students and faculty)

Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

Student Counseling Room

After experiencing a sudden, painful event, you may experience various changes, including emotional distress and physical symptoms. When these reactions occur after losing someone important, they are referred to as *grief*.

This document has been created as a form of psychological support to help you navigate the process of recovering from grief. If you are having difficulties, please do not struggle alone. Feel free to reach out to trusted friends, teachers, family members, staff at the Student Counseling Center or Health Care Center, or outside professionals (such as telephone counseling services or medical institutions, etc.).

Student Counseling Room HP:

<http://www.tufs.ac.jp/institutions/facility/sccs/> ⇒



### 【Possible Reactions and Symptoms That Require Care】

Experiencing the death of someone close one can lead to a variety of emotional and psychological difficulties for those left behind. Loss by suicide often has an greater impact death due to illness or accidents.

Individuals who go through such experiences may develop the symptoms listed below:

- I can't sleep.
- Even if I fall asleep, I wake up quickly.
- I have frightening dreams.
- I feel as if the deceased person, or the scene from the time of their death, appears before my eyes.
- I blame myself for the suicide.
- I feel preoccupied with thoughts of death.
- I feel as if there is a veil over the world around me.
- I have no motivation.
- I can't focus on my work or studies.
- I can't concentrate.

- I can't make even small decisions.
- I feel restless or anxious.
- I can't stop crying.
- My emotions feel unstable.
- I feel overwhelmed by anger.
- My heart pounds.
- I feel short of breath.
- I have ongoing vague physical discomfort.
- I don't want to see anyone.
- I feel afraid to be alone.

You may find yourself wondering, "What is happening to me?" But these reactions are temporary, and they represent your mind and body's effort to regain balance. They are responses that anyone can experience. In some cases, they may develop depression, anxiety disorders, acute stress disorder (ASD), or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which may require specialized treatment.

If any of the above symptoms persist for more than one month, we recommend that you consult a medical professional. If you are unsure about what to do, please feel free to contact the Student Counseling Office or the Health Care Center. (Faculty and staff members are asked to contact the Health Care Center.) If you notice similar symptoms in someone around you, please encourage them to seek support as well.

### **【The Grief Process】**

After a period of shock and emotional numbness, you may move into a stage marked by deep sadness, depression, and a strong longing to see the person you have lost. As time passes, feeling of anger may begin to surface.

Once you have navigated this storm of emotions, you will gradually be able to draw meaning from the experience and continue forward with your life.

## **【Mind and Body Care】**

When you experience a shock, your autonomic nervous system reacts before your mind can process what has happened, which can lead to various physical symptoms.

It is important to regulate your autonomic nervous system and stay calm. You may gradually be able to return to daily life even while feeling distressed, but if this does not seem to be happening, please seek professional help.

### **Release tension in your body**

1. Take a few deep breaths.
2. As you inhale, lift your shoulders and tense them. Feel the tension.
3. After holding the tension for about 10 seconds, exhale and let the tension go.
4. continue with your shoulders, hands, feet, neck, and face, and notice the gradual sense of warmth.

### **Regulating your breathing calms your autonomic nervous system**

Deep abdominal breathing sends a signal to your body that it is safe to rest, helping both your body and mind settle.

1. While sitting in a chair, gently close your eyes and place a hand on your abdomen. (you may place your hand on your abdomen while standing as well)
2. Slowly exhale through your mouth while silently counting "one, two, three..." in your mind.

Imagine the skin of your stomach drawing toward your spine.

3. Then relax your abdomen and slowly inhale through your nose.

Repeat steps 2 and 3 several times. You will begin to notice tension and irritability subside, leaving you feeling calmer.

### **Recall things that make you feel safe and at ease**

What place or moments make you feel most relaxed? Delicious food, warm tea, a beautiful view, or perhaps a fluffy cat or dog.

Maybe it is a favorite athlete, a beloved movie, or a superhero.

Try taking slow, deep breath while remembering that comforting scene or image.

**Try a butterfly hug**

Place your right hand on your left shoulder and your left hand on your right shoulder.

Gently tap your shoulders while recalling things that make you feel relaxed, strong, and reassured.

Repeat this several times, taking a slow breath and exhaling.

Continue tapping your shoulders while breathing slowly.

Try to notice your painful feelings gradually settling.

- **Have a casual conversation with a friend, coworker, or family.**
- **When you try to do something, start small and do it little by little!**

**【Nighttime consultation service】**

Yoriso Hotline: 0120-279-338

Mental Health Consultation Hotline (nationwide): 0570-064-556