

Coping with Grief

As Mentors and as members of the lung transplant community, we will likely face the untimely loss of someone we are close to in the lung transplant community. After all, we are dealing with life-threatening illnesses which requires us to prepare ourselves for death. Coping with the loss of someone you love or care about is one of life's biggest challenges. If you find yourself in this situation, please let your Lead Mentor know. We can discuss options on what to do, how you should proceed, and provide any support you need.

Grief is the natural response to loss. Often the pain of this loss can feel overwhelming. You may experience all kinds of difficult and unexpected emotions, from shock or anger to disbelief, guilt, and profound sadness. Many even experience changes in their physical health as grief can make it difficult to sleep, eat, or think clearly. These are all normal responses to loss. The more significant the loss, the more intense your grief will be.

Grieving is an individualized experience. There is no right or wrong way to grieve and this process takes time. Healing happens at varying timeframes for each person. There are resources available to assist you during this time. Whether you are facing the death of a loved one, Mentee, fellow Mentor, or friend, these strategies can assist in recognizing and supporting you during this time.

WAYS TO COPE WITH YOUR GRIEF (Source: <https://www.helpguide.org/>)

- Acknowledge your pain
- Accept that grief can trigger many different and unexpected emotions
- Understand that your grieving process will be unique to you
- Seek out support from your loved ones
- Support yourself emotionally by taking care of yourself physically
- Recognize the difference between grief and depression

RESOURCES:

Kubler-Ross' 5 stages of coping with death (DABDA)

1. **Denial** is usually only a temporary defense for the individual. It helps us to survive the loss. There is a grace in denial. It is nature's way of letting in only as much as we can handle.
2. **Anger** is a necessary stage of the healing process. It can extend to friends, family, doctors, yourself, your higher power, or the person who died. Underneath the anger is pain.
3. **Bargaining:** We will do anything not to feel the pain of this loss.
4. **Depression:** Empty feelings present themselves. It is the appropriate response to a great loss.
5. **Acceptance:** This stage is about accepting the reality that our loved one is physically gone and recognizing that this new reality is permanent.

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People often think of the stages as lasting weeks or months. They forget that the stages are responses to feelings that can last for minutes or hours as we flip in and out of one and then another. Take time to allow yourself to grieve. Do not suppress your feelings.

The Five Invitations: *Discovering What Death Can Teach Us About Living Fully* by Frank Ostaseski

The co-founder of the Zen Hospice Project and the pioneer behind the compassionate care movement shares an inspiring exploration of the lessons dying has to offer about living a fulfilling life.

This book provides a unique perspective on the meaning of life and how maintaining an ever-present consciousness of death can bring us closer to our truest selves. They can be understood as best practices and are for anyone coping with loss or navigating any sort of transition or crisis. Those of us in the lung transplant community will benefit from the lessons shared. They guide us toward appreciating life to the fullest!

These are 5 mutually supportive principles and are reliable guides for coping with death. They are also equally relevant guides to living a life of integrity.

The 5 Invitations:

1. Don't wait
2. Welcome everything, push away nothing
3. Bring your whole self to the experience
4. Find a place of rest in the middle of things
5. Cultivate a "don't know mind." Seek to be ignorant. A "Don't Know Mind" is one characterized by curiosity, surprise, and wonder. Enter life with fresh eyes and a fresh perspective

Reflecting on death can have a profound and positive impact not just on how we die, but on how we live. Death is always with us, integral to life itself. Everything is constantly changing. Nothing is permanent. The idea can both frighten and inspire us.

The Mentorship Team

Our Mentorship Team is our greatest resource. We have a great team of Mentors who have, unfortunately, dealt with losing a Mentee, a loved one, or a friend in the lung transplant community. Please let us know if you would like additional support or resources on this matter.