

PATHWAYS CENTER for GRIEF & LOSS

GRIEF AND LOSS AS A YOUNG ADULT

Grief is difficult for everyone, regardless of your age. The more you care about someone or something, the more you will react and grieve when change occurs. For the young adult, age 18-25, when loss occurs it comes at a time in life that is already challenging. Learning to live independently, deciding on a career path, developing significant relationships, and figuring out who you are and what you value in life are some of the major adjustments you are already making. A loss at this time in your life impacts all these other changes that are also occurring.

It is important to recognize not only the loss but the impact it has on all the different areas of your life. Consider the following:

- Loss occurs whenever you are unable to keep someone or something that is important to you. Grief is a natural and normal response to loss.
- Grief is a process, not an event. Allow yourself time to grieve, don't set a timeline for when you should 'be over it.' You don't get over a loss; you learn how to live with it.
- Grief will affect you physically. You may feel exhausted, even if you haven't been physically active. Often grief will also impact your appetite and sleeping patterns.
- You may experience headaches and have difficulty concentrating.
- Try to be aware of *how* you are affected so you can best tend to and take care of yourself.
- Identify who you can turn to for support – someone who will not judge you or try to solve your problems for you. Finding someone who is willing and able to listen to you can be a valuable part of your grief journey.
- You may feel very alone in your grief. It can be both helpful and reassuring if you are able to talk with others your age who have also experienced a significant loss.
- Don't overlook the secondary losses that will accompany your significant loss – these can include loss of hopes and dreams, loss of a sense of safety and security, perhaps a loss of meaning in life or your sense of direction and focus.

"I really think I couldn't have made it through this tragedy without my close friends. They can read me like a book. They can always tell when I'm down and need someone to talk to. They try to give their advice and still let me know that they understand and respect my feelings and actions. One afternoon I really needed to be with them but I just couldn't talk to them. They understood that and their presence was reassuring and comforting." (A College Senior)