

# WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN SOMETHING REALLY BAD HAPPENS



## WHAT TO EXPECT:

- that your life will not be the same as it was before.
- that it will take you longer than you would like to stop thinking about the event.
- that you will not have the same reactions as anyone else.
- some other adjustment reactions, including
  - *need for information.*
  - *inability to sleep or sleeping too much.*
  - *headaches.*
  - *disorientation, concentration problems or difficulty making decisions.*
  - *disinterest in eating, schoolwork, taking care of yourself, and/or other normally pleasurable activities.*
  - *isolation: thinking that you should (or want to) be able to handle the situation all by yourself.*

- that you won't have all the feelings and reactions (see box below).
- reactions with reminders, including
  - *places that held significance.*
  - *topics of conversation.*
  - *songs.*
  - *special dates like birthdays, holidays and anniversaries.*
  - *smells (like the person's cologne, for example).*

## COMMON REACTIONS TO BAD EVENTS:

- **Grief:** a pure, overwhelming sense of sadness.
- **Anger and Suspicion:** anger at a person or group; anger or increased irritability in routine situations.
- **Abandonment:** feeling that you have been left by a person – particularly if there was no opportunity to say goodbye.
- **Frustration and Powerlessness:** that you couldn't prevent something from happening.
- **Remorse and Guilt:** related to feeling good (even momentarily) if you think you are supposed to continually feel bad.
- **Fear/Anxiety/Panic:** that something similar could happen to you or to a loved one.
- **Confusion:** inability to answer the “big” questions about life and death.
- **Embarrassment:** feeling uncomfortable with your (and others') display of grief; feeling like you are feeling more than you should.
- **Denial or Numbness:** denial or numbness of the feelings about the event.



## CONTACT COUNSELING:

- if you find that your feelings are persisting in ways that are uncomfortable to you.
- if disturbing images are intruding in your waking or dreaming life.
- if your use of alcohol or other drugs has increased since the loss.
- if your reactions are getting in the way of doing what you need to do for school or in relationships.
- if you are concerned about how a friend is reacting.
- if you are feeling depressed and hopeless.

## HOW TO HELP YOURSELF:

- **Talk to others.** Spend time with someone who understands, not necessarily talking about it but secure in the knowledge that they “get it.”
- **Listen to others.** Remember that you don’t have to always respond with words.
- **Accept help from others:** doing errands, taking notes in class, etc.
- **Validate your own feelings.** They might not be comfortable, but they are normal and expected.
- **Celebrate their life.** If you have lost a person, remembering the good times can help present a balanced picture of the person.
- **Celebrate your life.** There’s nothing like a loss to remind us to live every day to the fullest, to not put off your dreams until a “later” date that we might not get. Dedicate your goal to your friend’s memory. Do it for them, as well as yourself.

For help or further information, call Furman University Counseling Center at 864.294.3031. For emergencies, call 911 or Furman University Police at 864.294.2111.

The Counseling Center is located in the lower level of the Earle Health Services bldg., Ste. 001 (lakeside entrance).

We are open 8:30 a.m.-noon, 1-5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

All services are free and confidential.



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