



ASK THE EXPERT
WITH REV. KIRSTEN M. WORZALA DUMKE

Thoughts on Grief

Dealing with a new diagnosis, facing life after divorce or separation, experiencing loss of ability or health and grieving the death of a loved one are among many stressors that can make emotions more pronounced and life more challenging. It is important to recognize these emotions, making space for yourself in the midst of the transition from a dreary winter to life-giving spring.

As the seasons change and as time passes you may feel the need to keep the same routine or you may not feel like participating in familiar activities. Regardless of what you decide, be sure to be gentle with yourself in this season, allowing time to feel the emotions that are true to you and making a conscious effort to participate in the events that serve you well.

It is important to be intentional with your time, energy, and emotional, mental, and spiritual resources. These are some things that people have found to be helpful when grieving:

- Visit a familiar or meaningful place
- Partake in known traditions
- Make new traditions
- Reflect quietly
- Eat familiar and comforting foods
- Write in a journal or write letters to your loved ones
- Say a prayer or have a prayer service for/with your loved ones
- Care for yourself by relaxing and being with friends and family
- Exercise, get a massage or find another activity to lessen stress for your mind, body, and spirit

Some things that are meaningful or important at the beginning of your journey with grief may change as time passes. Similarly, you may find that new activities or traditions become a part of your routine with the passing of time. When keeping your best interest at heart whatever decisions you make will be the right ones.

There may be others around you who are also experiencing grief and they may or may not have similar ways of coping. Everyone deals with grief and loss differently and that is okay. Talking may be hard at first and you might not know what to say, but it is important that you are communicating with your loved ones during this time, letting them know how you are doing and allowing them to help when you need them by your side.

As we leave the darkness and cold of winter it is my hope that you are surrounded by people and activities that are good for you, bringing new life, peace, and healing to you wherever you are in your journey.



Rev. Kirsten M. Worzala Dumke is the chaplain for UW Health's Outpatient Palliative Care Team. She has spent much of her chaplaincy career working with families who are grieving losses of various types and is currently creating a bereavement program for the Outpatient Palliative Care Team.