



## Coping with Traumatic Events, Grief, and Unexpected Loss

Unexpected losses and violent events take a physical and psychological toll and also interrupt our sense of order and safety. Responses may include psychological and physiological effects such as hypervigilance, anxiety, avoidance, numbness, sadness, and somatic expressions, such as headaches and heart palpitations, among others. Each of us has different capacities, responses, and ways to cope. There is no “right” or one way to react or cope.

### Coping with Trauma, Grief, and Loss

It is important to identify what you can do to reconnect with yourself and your community to regain a sense of centeredness in the midst of grief, loss, and trauma.

- **Acknowledge** the toll it takes on our bodies, emotions, spirit, and ability to engage in life tasks. Doing a quick body scan or asking yourself some of the questions below can be helpful in making sense of what’s going on for us and what we might need.
  - How am I feeling?
  - What is going on for me?
  - Where am I holding the pain and tension?
  - What am I needing in this moment?
- **Attend to self-care.** While it may seem counterintuitive to think about taking care of yourself first, you cannot be of service to others if you are not doing well. Some ways to take care of yourself include:
  - Care of the body: eating, hydrating, sleeping, moving, and hygiene care.
  - Care of emotional health: talking, writing, and finding outlets, such as drawing/painting, and music.
  - Care of one’s spirit: faith- and non-faith-based practices, such as prayers, meditation, mindfulness, and nature.
  - Care of community: connecting with trusted others; checking in with others in the community; immersing in cultural practices or traditions, such as writing, music, arts, food, narratives, and stories.
- **Seek support** from family, friends, mentors, and campus and community organizations. Sharing your loss with family and friends may foster a sense of connection and help with the pain you may be feeling. For some, seeking help from a mental health professional can be beneficial, while for others, seeking support and healing from spiritual, religious, and community leaders can be more helpful. Please know that you’re not alone and you don’t have to figure things out by yourself!
- **Set boundaries** with others, the ways in which you engage, and your time. Taking a step back from the news, social media, or conversations doesn’t mean that you don’t care or don’t want to be informed—it means that you are taking care of yourself. You can choose when, how, and with whom to engage.



# UChicago Student Wellness

## What Not to Do

- Don't make big life changes impulsively
- Don't isolate yourself
- Don't numb yourself with alcohol or drugs
- Don't expect difficult feelings to disappear quickly
- Don't be hard on yourself; we all cope in different ways

## Mental Health Support

[UChicago Student Wellness](#) is here to support students. We strive to provide inclusive, affirming, and culturally competent mental health services and support to our students.

- UChicago Student Wellness Phone Number: 773.834.WELL (9355)
- 24/7 Therapist on-call: 773.702.3625

## Campus Resources

- [Center for College Student Success](#)
- [Center for Identity + Inclusion](#)
- [Office of International Affairs](#)
- [Office of Multicultural Student Affairs](#)
- [Spiritual Life](#)
- [UChicagoGRAD](#)