

# Grief Support: When Your Learning Community Experiences a Student Loss

## The loss of a student's life can deeply affect the entire learning community.

Whether or not individuals knew the student personally, the sense of loss can ripple across campus. For those who had a direct relationship with the student, the level of grief may be influenced by many factors—including the closeness of the relationship, the circumstances of the death, and the timing of the loss.

Students form strong bonds with one another as they navigate independence, new environments, and shared experiences. These relationships are unique, and when they end, the emotional impact can be intense. It's expected that many people will feel sadness, distraction, or emotional strain during this time. Empathy and support within the community are essential.

## Acknowledge the Loss

Give yourself permission to talk about what happened and how it has affected you. Allow space for reflection. Prioritize self-care—connect with loved ones, engage in healthy activities, move your body, and get adequate rest. Grief can be mentally and physically exhausting, and caring for your well-being is an important part of healing.

## Create Space for Open, Supportive Conversation

Encourage open and honest dialogue among students, faculty, and staff. Some individuals may feel comfortable sharing in a group setting, while others may prefer one-on-one conversations. Everyone processes grief in their own way and on their own timeline. Some people respond immediately; others experience delayed reactions. Both are normal.

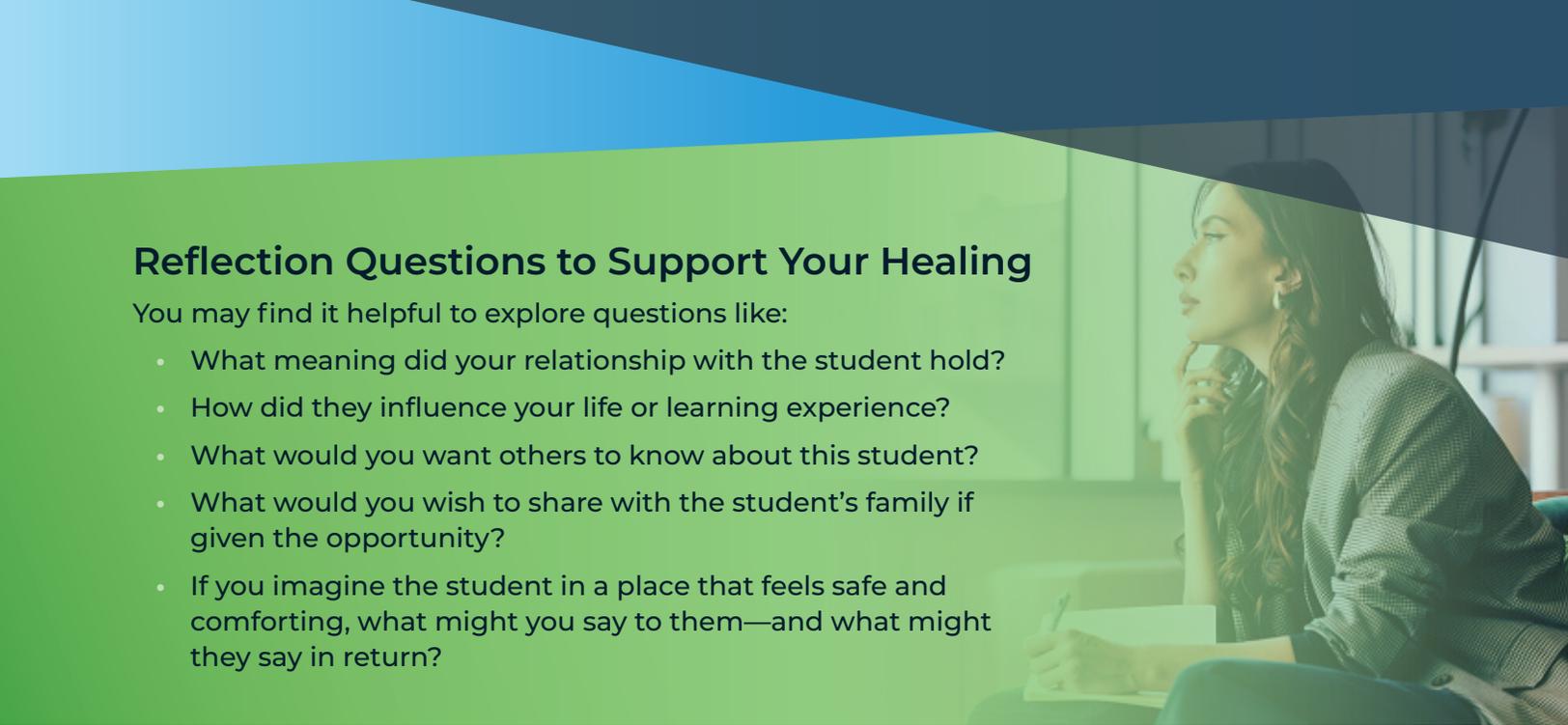
Be mindful and respectful of these differences. Avoid pressuring yourself or others to “move on” or “get over” the loss. Healing is a personal and nonlinear process.

## Engaging in Meaningful Grieving Rituals

Use grieving rituals that feel comforting or significant to you. Support groups, peer connections, and community gatherings can be powerful healing tools. You may also honor the student's memory privately, such as through journaling or personal reflection.

Sometimes simply saying, “*You mattered to me, and I will miss you,*” can create a sense of release and connection.





## Reflection Questions to Support Your Healing

You may find it helpful to explore questions like:

- What meaning did your relationship with the student hold?
- How did they influence your life or learning experience?
- What would you want others to know about this student?
- What would you wish to share with the student's family if given the opportunity?
- If you imagine the student in a place that feels safe and comforting, what might you say to them—and what might they say in return?

## There Is No “Right” Way to Grieve

Grief is personal. There is no correct timeline and no single path forward. You played a meaningful role in this student's life, and honoring their memory in a way that feels authentic to you is an important part of healing.



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