



Counseling & Student Development Center

# GUIDE TO EMOTIONAL HEALTH & WELLBEING



Caring for Others



Grief and Loss



Mindful-Self-Compassion



Seeking Help



Tolerating Uncertainty



# CARING FOR OTHERS



**Both Care and Empathy are needed to sustain a relationship.**



**Caring** is defined as feeling and exhibiting concern and empathy for others.

**Empathy** can be defined as the ability to understand how others are feeling and how to respond appropriately to their situation.

## We Can Enhance Our Empathy

by consciously imagining what it might be like to navigate the feelings and situations of another person's life. We can ask ourselves:

- What would it be like for me to manage that person's experiences?
- What could that feel like for that person?
- Is there a time in my life where I may have felt something similar?

## Empathy is a Valuable Tool for Maintaining Healthy Relationships

- Empathy bridges the divide between individuals with different backgrounds, feelings and perspectives.
- Empathy is essential to building and maintaining relationships.
- Without empathy, we focus only on our perspectives, disregarding the feelings of others, which leads to misunderstandings and conflict.
- Empathy fosters self-awareness and social-awareness.

## Using a Social Justice Lens Can Enhance our Empathic Connection to Others

Social justice is about equality. To be socially just, every individual in society must be treated in a fair and reasonable way. However, our world promotes numerous social injustices that strongly affect individuals in our society.

- Some common examples of social injustice include: systemic racial discrimination, discrimination due to gender and sexual orientation, immigration, unfair labor practices, lack of access to resources, income disparity, etc.

## TIPS FOR BEGINNING TO ADDRESS SOCIAL INJUSTICE

- Examine the historical and current context of the issues from perspectives of power, racial disparities, civil rights movement, criminal justice system, stereotypes, conflicts, and ambiguity
- Examine your worldview, cultural values, biases, ambiguity, and privilege
- When you see injustice happening don't just let it happen, speak up
- Commit to having conversations about injustice and acknowledging that doing so may require us to face uncomfortable realities
- Speaking out may not change the perspectives of other people, but it is a way that you can serve as an ally for people who are marginalized by injustice

**Remember, looking out for other people requires us to look out for our own well-being first, so we are healthy enough and have enough energy available to offer help when others are in need.**

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What does it take to be more empathetic?
- How can I expand my empathetic potential?
- How do I take care of myself while taking care of others?

# GRIEF AND LOSS



**When we think of LOSS and GRIEF, we often think of the death of a loved one and the deep sadness that follows.**

But, loss can come in many forms, and grieving can involve so much more than sadness.

***Painful losses may include:***

- dreams for the future
- physical health
- athletic ability
- career goals
- financial security
- romantic relationship
- religious faith
- family connections
- trust in others
- our place within a community
- societal stability
- our sense of our own personal identity

We may also find that we have lost an overall and on-going sense of safety and stability (e.g., chronic threats to our health, racial injustice).

Emotions that come with loss, may include anger, confusion, guilt, shame, loneliness, a sense of betrayal and distrust, anxiety and fear.

**It is important to remember that grieving and accepting loss is a *PROCESS* through which we move over time.** We may be left with emotional “scar tissue” which will always be sensitive. We can adjust and will recover (and we may even find ourselves in a better, stronger place once we have done our grieving) – but this takes time, and may also require our taking active steps to change ourselves or the world around us.

Finally, it is important to remember that none of us make it through the challenges of life all alone. When we are experiencing loss and are grieving, it is important to let others care for us, to reach out to others for support. We really do need one another.

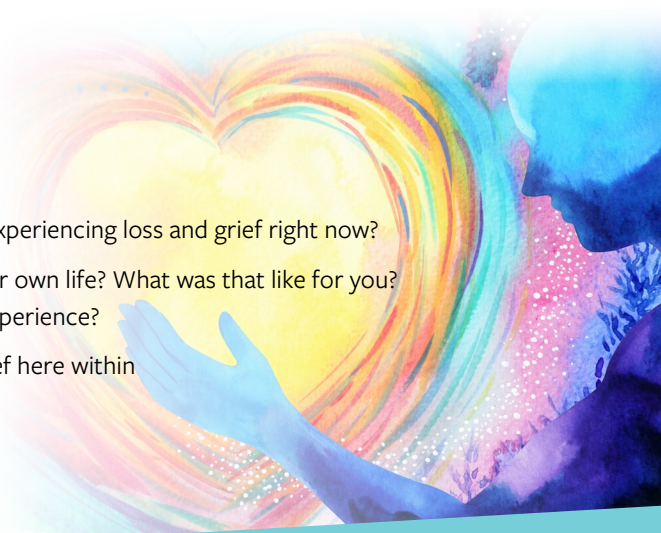
## SOURCES OF SUPPORT ON THE BUCKNELL CAMPUS INCLUDE:



Accessibility Resources	International Student Services	Residential Life
Bucknell Student Health	Multicultural Student Services	Religious and Spiritual Life
Community College Scholars Program	Office of LGBTQ Resources	Title IX
Counseling & Student Development Center	Posse Scholars Program	Women’s Resource Center
GenFirst!@Bucknell		

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- In what ways might some of the members of our Bucknell community be experiencing loss and grief right now?
- If you are comfortable sharing... Have you experienced loss and grief in your own life? What was that like for you? How did you cope with that experience? Did you grow as a result of that experience?
- How can we support others who are struggling right now with loss and grief here within our Bucknell community?
- To whom can you turn for support in times of loss?





# MINDFUL-SELF-COMPASSION



Combines the skills of mindfulness and self-compassion, providing a powerful tool for emotional resilience.

**Mindfulness**, the practice of consciously directing our awareness, helps us to acknowledge our difficult thoughts and feelings (such as inadequacy, sadness, anger, confusion) with a spirit of openness and curiosity.

- Mindfulness can be useful because we can learn to ground ourselves in the present moment
- Mindfulness meditation may also help us focus on thoughts of acceptance and compassion
- There's no right or wrong way to practice mindfulness, it simply involves choosing to meditate
- Even 10 minutes per day can make a significant difference in our mental health and wellbeing

**Self-compassion** involves responding to these difficult thoughts and feelings with kindness, sympathy and understanding so that we soothe and comfort ourselves when we're hurting.

- Self-compassion involves accepting ourselves as we are and choosing to love ourselves without condition
- Using self-compassion, we learn not to judge ourselves too harshly or to distort reality to either criticize ourselves or falsely build ourselves up
- Practicing self-compassion allows us to honor and accept our humanness and helps us celebrate our unique worth, recognizing that we are acceptable just as we are
- Self-compassion often takes practice because for many of us it is often easier to express empathy and compassion for others than it is for ourselves

## GROUNDING TECHNIQUE:

When we feel overwhelmed, the most self-compassionate response may be to pull back temporarily and concentrate on breathing slowly.

**Focus on the breath, and try to ground yourself in the present moment using your 5 senses. Identify:**



Finally, when you notice yourself experiencing negative thoughts and feelings about yourself, try to be kind and understanding of how you feel. Remind yourself that you are a human being who deserves love, kindness, and compassion. It may be helpful to try to soothe yourself the way a kind parent might soothe a young child who is feeling scared.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How does self-compassion differ from self-esteem?
- How does the following quote relate to Mindfulness Self- Compassion?  
“Self-acceptance is my refusal to be in an adversarial relationship with myself” – Nathaniel Branden
- Why do you think that we tend to be kinder and more accepting of our friends than ourselves?
- How do you think things might change if you responded to yourself in the same way you typically respond to close friends when they are suffering?
- What's one small step you can take today to feel more joy or calm in your life?
- What is one healthy thing you can do to support yourself when you feel overwhelmed, sad, or stressed out?

# SEEKING HELP



## HOW AM I FEELING?

During stressful times you might notice some uncomfortable thoughts or feelings that let you know that something is wrong. These may include:

- Excessive fear or worry
- Changes in sleeping habits or feeling tired and low energy
- Overuse of substances like alcohol or drugs
- Thinking about suicide
- Extreme mood changes (highs or lows)
- Prolonged feelings of irritability
- Avoiding friends and social activities
- An intense fear of weight gain or concern with appearance

## ASKING FOR HELP/ COPING WITH STIGMA

Roughly 1 in 5 Bucknell students utilizes CSDC services. Learning to accept the way you're feeling and recognize what you need to do to treat it, seeking support, and helping educate others can make a big difference.

**Don't let stigma create self-doubt and shame.** Stigma doesn't just come from others. You may mistakenly believe that your feelings are a sign of personal weakness or that you should be able to control it without help.

**Don't isolate yourself.** Not receiving support from those at home? Can you connect with a peer whom you know has sought out support with their mental health? Even a virtual connection via Zoom or Google Hangouts can be a beneficial form of connection in stressful times.

**Don't equate your worth with your feelings.** You are not an illness and the way you feel is not a reflection of your worth. Admitting that you are struggling does not make you "less than" or "weak." It means that we are ready to accept help to get better.

**Building Connection.** When feeling stressed it is especially important to develop supportive connections by actively engaging with others. While we may feel a desire to isolate ourselves, doing so will generally make things worse over a prolonged period. Instead try to reach out to friends or loved ones through Video Chat, Texting, or Phone Calls.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What symptoms do you experience that let you know it may be time to seek help?
- What barriers have prevented you from seeking help in the past?
- How have you maintained relationships during this time?
- What are some strategies that you have found helpful in the past to support your mental health?

## resources

### [Counseling & Student Development Center](#)

Will offer telehealth appointments and consultations as well as crisis services. Call the CSDC at **570-577-1604**

### [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) **800-273-TALK (8255)**

### [Crisis Text Line](#)

Text: **NAMI** to **741-741**

### [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) **800-799-SAFE (7233)**

### [National Sexual Assault Hotline](#) **800-656-HOPE (4673)**

### [National Institute of Mental Health](#)

Students of Color - [The Steve Fund](#)  
Text **STEVE** to **741-741**

LGBTQ+ Support - [Trevor Project](#)  
**(866)-488-7386**

Trans Support - [Trans Lifeline](#)  
**(877)-565-8860**



# TOLERATING UNCERTAINTY



Our human brains HATE change and the unknown! Knowing what to expect and how to solve problems is how we've stayed safe all these years. Uncertainty meant danger. When we aren't sure about something, our brain will do its best to fill in the blanks, even if it means guessing or assuming the worst. We're hardwired to overestimate threats and underestimate our ability to manage those threats, which is when anxiety kicks in, hoping to save the day. It's important to remember that feeling anxious is **NORMAL**. It's how you respond to the anxiety from uncertainty that determines how things will go.

## ANXIETY ABOUT UNCERTAINTY SHOWS ITSELF AS...

- Getting stuck in cycles of, "What if...?"
- Seeking reassurance through obsessively thinking or asking others for advice
- Struggling with plans that aren't fully formed or changes to routine
- Fear of new experiences because you don't know what to expect
- Struggling with transitions between routine changes
- Dichotomous thinking or having very firm opinions about how things should be
- Over-preparing and not allowing others to help or support you
- Deferring to others to make decisions for you
- Impulsively making a decision to get it over with



## SO NOW WHAT? PLOT TWIST!

### 1 Recognize Signs of Frustration

Know your physical and cognitive cues that signal when you are starting to get frustrated. Frustration stops you from thinking clearly and creatively. Take 5-10 deep breaths to stop the downward spiral and allow your wiser mind to prevail.

### 2 Challenge Your Thinking

Notice when a fear about your abilities occurs (e.g. "There's nothing I can do about this. I'm helpless."). Then push back on it by focusing on what is within your control ("I may not know how to do XXX but, for now at least, I can do YYY."). Seek out a friend, family member or mentor for support to help you maintain perspective and ground yourself in what is within your control and what to try and let go.

### 3 Celebrate Past Success

The current situation may indeed be challenging. Fortunately for you, you have faced challenges before! Think back on a time when things were uncertain and you weren't sure it would work out. What strategies and skills did you use to overcome a past challenge?

### 4 Practice Acceptance

Acknowledge that we may not have the control to fulfill our desired outcomes. We can allow reality to be true without fighting against it, which leads to exhaustion and frustration in addition to the pain of the problem itself. Use mindfulness to help you ground yourself each time the struggle to accept arises.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How does anxiety manifest itself for you – physically, emotionally & mentally?
- What situations (people, environments, etc.) tend to provoke the most anxiety about uncertainty for you?
- What is a mantra or phrase that you could say to yourself for comfort in the midst of uncertainty?