

# Coping with guilt, loss and grief



**LINCOLN**  
UNIVERSITY  
TE WHARE WĀNAKA O AORAKI

**COVID-19 travel and gathering limitations mean we could be away from our friends and whānau when they need us the most. It can be very distressing dealing with a bereavement and not being able to be physically present.**

## Common reactions

- Angry, tense, irritable, snappy
- Tearful, sensitive
- Feeling powerless at being so far away
- Difficulty concentrating or sleeping
- Desperation or disbelief
- Vulnerable and weak
- Feeling helpless or isolated
- Feel guilty for not being there
- Avoiding emotions
- Increased alcohol and/or drug use
- Social withdrawal
- Overwhelming sense of responsibility



**Here are some ideas to help you cope with what you're feeling and to process your emotions in helpful ways.**



**LINCOLN**  
UNIVERSITY  
TE WHARE WĀNAKA O AORAKI

## Tips to cope with guilt, loss and grief

### **Recognise that your feelings are normal.**

It's okay to have a whole range of feelings as part of grief and loss. All of your feelings are valid. Naming a feeling and telling yourself that it's okay to feel that way can help you to feel better.

### **Know that you're not going crazy.**

Having feelings such as anger, worry or sadness are normal when you're grieving, they don't mean you're going crazy or are ill.

### **Accept that grief is sometimes irrational.**

Sometimes the things you feel, think, or say may not seem rational, and that's okay.

### **Accept that your emotions can**

**fluctuate** from day to day, hour to hour, minute to minute.

### **Let go of expectations of how you should feel.**

Allow your feelings of loss to be what they are and be present to your feelings. Over time you will learn you can tolerate this experience of grief.

### **Set aside times to grieve distinct from times when you need to study or do other things.**

Visualise yourself placing your grief and sadness into a box with a lid. They are taken care of for the moment and can be brought out when appropriate or at a time you put aside for this every day.

### **Be extra kind to yourself.**

Treat yourself as you would a good friend.

### **Develop new daily routines.**

Routine and ritual allow us to relax our vigilant nervous system and give us a feeling of stability.

### **Remember that our activities, thoughts, and mood are closely linked.**

Focus on aspects of your life that you have control over right now, in the next hour or day. An example might be listening to music or going for a walk.

### **Try to stay in the present.**

Focus on aspects of your life that you have control over right now, in the next hour or day.

### **Learn ways to calm yourself down.**

Spending time with a pet, taking five slow breaths or experimenting with meditation apps usually lowers our cortisol levels and improves our wellbeing.

### **Find ways to express your grief.**

Some people express grief and find comfort through art, collage, gardening, writing, cooking, music or other creative practices.

### **Think about what you might say to a friend who is feeling guilty.**

Speak to yourself just as you would to your friend, with kindness.

### **Know who you can call for support.**

Be honest with those you trust and explain how you're feeling. You'll likely find they're feeling much the same way.

### **Help others in need.**

This creates more purpose to your day and helps you to feel more positive.

### **Ask for help.**

If your way of coping is harmful or self-destructive, ask a counsellor, doctor, or wellbeing advisor to explore this with you.



## Support contacts

### **Emergencies**

If you or someone else is at serious risk of harm

Call Emergency Services P: 111

### **Campus Security**

P: 0800 545 388

### **National contacts:**

#### **For mental health concerns 24/7**

Free call or text 1737

### **Healthline**

P: 0800 358 5453

### **Diversity Counselling NZ**

E: [contact@dcnz.net](mailto:contact@dcnz.net)

### **Women's Centre free counselling**

E: [support@womenscentre.co.nz](mailto:support@womenscentre.co.nz)

### **Students:**

#### **Student Health**

P: 03 325 3835

#### **Wellbeing Advisors**

E: [wellbeing.support@lincoln.ac.nz](mailto:wellbeing.support@lincoln.ac.nz)

#### **Inclusive Education**

E: [inclusive@lincoln.ac.nz](mailto:inclusive@lincoln.ac.nz)

#### **International Student Advisors**

E: [internationaladvisors@lincoln.ac.nz](mailto:internationaladvisors@lincoln.ac.nz)

#### **Te Manutaki, Māori and Pasifika Support**

E: [ompd@lincoln.ac.nz](mailto:ompd@lincoln.ac.nz)

#### **LUSA Student Advocacy**

E: [students@lusa.org.nz](mailto:students@lusa.org.nz)

### **Faculty and staff:**

#### **Employment Assistance Programme**

P: 0800 327 669

### **SAFELU App**

Download **SAFELU** for easy access to support contacts