

# GRIEF IN ACADEMIA

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In collaboration with the Office of the Provost and EDI  
Faculty Matters Session  
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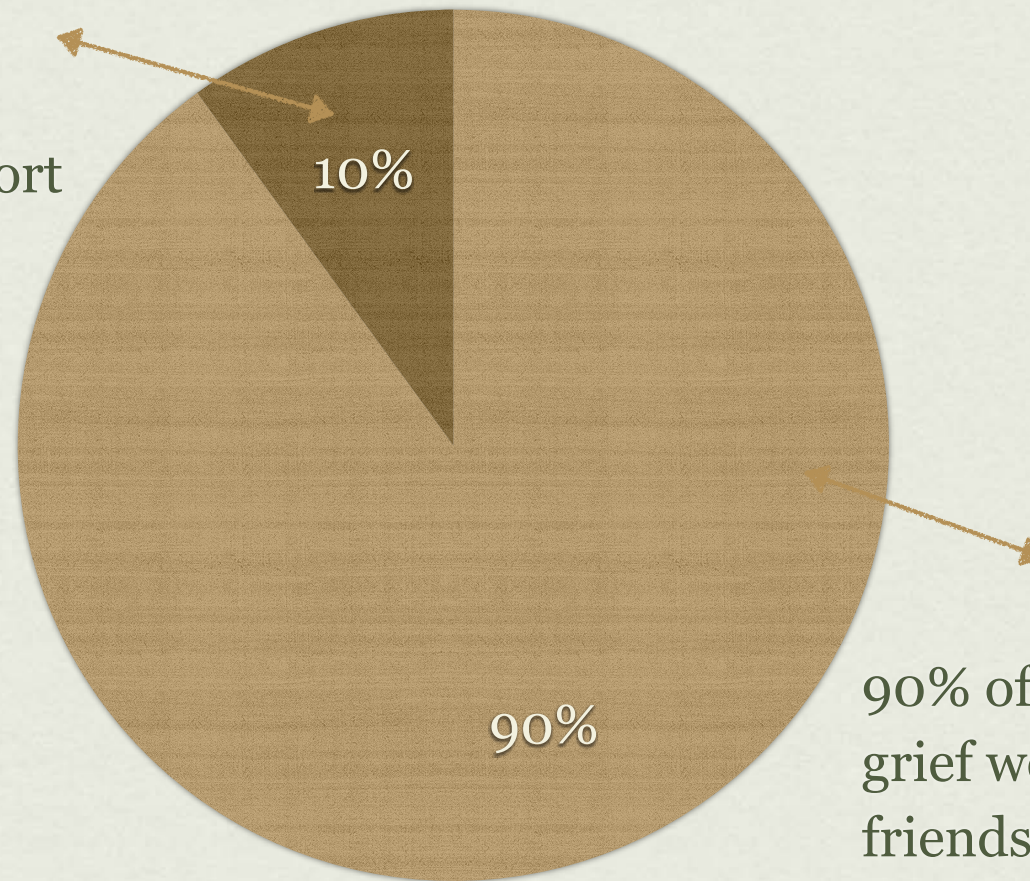
# GRIEF IS...

- Healthy, necessary & normal response to loss
- Different for everyone
- Culturally influenced
- The continuation of a relationship
- Impactful on daily life
- A whole mind/body experience
- Worthy of support



“Rising Cairn” by Celeste Roberge

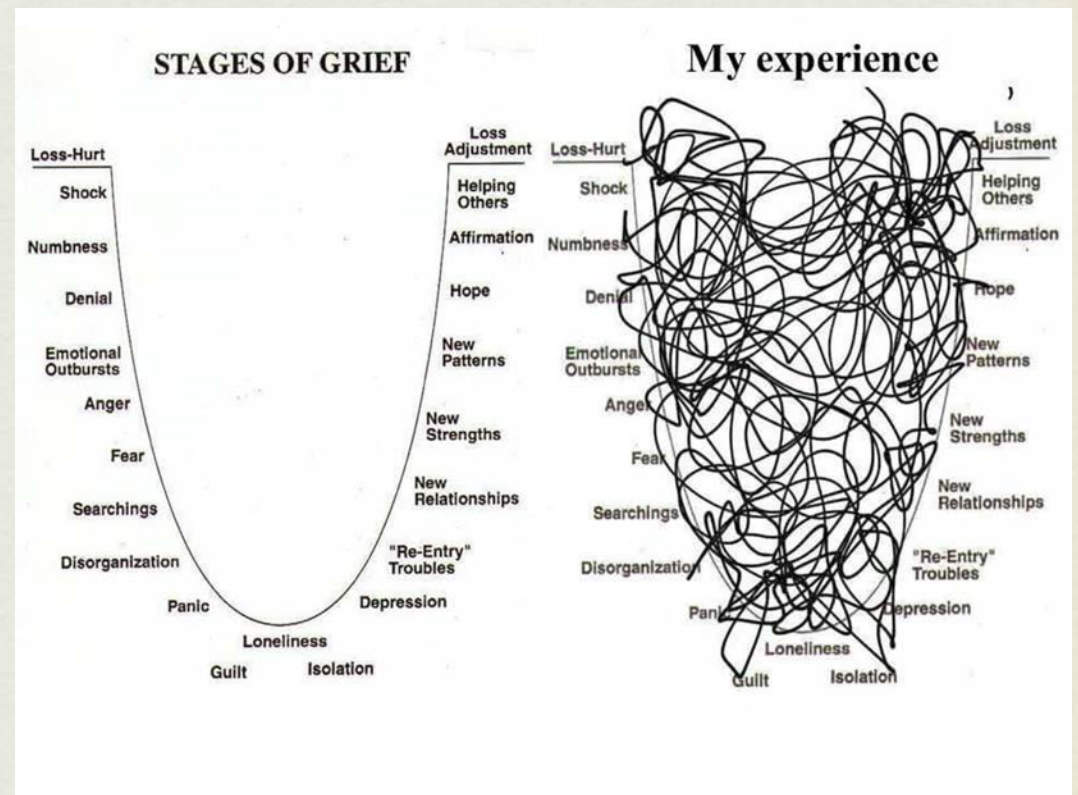
10% of people who  
experience grief  
may need  
specialized support



90% of people navigate  
grief well with support of  
friends/family/workplace

# GRIEF IS NOT....

- A problem that needs to be fixed
- A set of stages
- Only expressed one way (eg. crying)
- Something to be ranked or compared depending on the type of loss
- Something to get over



GRIEF FROM LOSS IS LIKE THE BUTTER IN A PASTRY.



IT'S HUGE AND IMPOSING AND SEEMINGLY IMPENETRABLE.



IT SITS HEAVY, SMOTHERING EVERYTHING.



BUT EVENTUALLY IT GETS FOLDED IN.



IT'S NEVER GONE, BUT INSTEAD INFILTRATES EVERY PART.



IT'S THERE, BUT SOFTER IN TEXTURE AND FLAVOR, INTEGRATED INTO YOUR LIFE FROM HERE ON OUT, INFORMING EACH MOMENT.



UNTIL ONE DAY, IT IS SIMPLY PART OF YOU IN A WAY THAT FEELS OKAY.



# WHAT IS NOT HELPFUL

- Colleagues or Dean/Director ignoring the situation
- Expectations from others to carry on as normal
- Getting a lot of generic condolences (e.g. “I am sorry for your loss”) but no concrete support
- Not realizing how long grief can last
- Trying to navigate McGill policy for time off
- Not knowing how a drop in performance will be perceived
- Trying to power through "as normal"
- Advice on how to get over it
- People telling their story (e.g. “the same thing happened to me”)

# WHAT IS HELPFUL

- Speaking about feelings with family, friends, family doctor
- Colleagues who step up and help navigate the HR system
- No questions asked, just support given
- People simply showing up
- Being asked about the person
- Practical gifts like food
- People checking in months later

# FACULTY GRIEF RESOURCES



## Academic Personnel Office

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## Bereavement and Grief: A Guide for Academic Staff

Grief is a normal reaction to loss, and something that each of us is likely to experience multiple times in our lives. How and what we grieve is personal and differs for everyone, but grief's impacts are often protracted and profound, and not easily or neatly separated from our work lives.

This website was developed within the OPVPA in conversation with faculty members and academic administrators who have experienced a death-related loss while working at McGill and who accepted an invitation to come together to identify approaches and resources that can better support those navigating grief and bereavement. Paramount for us was to ensure that what we developed was tailored to the particularities of grieving for academics, who were likely to have significant responsibilities related to teaching, research, and service.

For more information or if you have questions, please email our [Faculty Liaisons](#) for Academic Staff Living with Grief and Bereavement.



# FACULTY GRIEF RESOURCES

- Bereavement and Grief: A Guide for Academics (<https://www.mcgill.ca/apo/staff-guides/bereavement-and-grief>)
  - Information about grief and loss
  - Resources for the grieving colleague, resources for academic leaders & resources for colleagues of those grieving
  - Helpful references and further reading

# FACULTY GRIEF RESOURCES

- Grief liaison contact information
  - Tamara Sussman, Department of Social Work
  - Stephanie Posthumus, Department of Languages, Literatures & Cultures
  - [grief.liaison@mcgill.ca](mailto:grief.liaison@mcgill.ca)