

Appendix C: Guidelines for Communicating About Grief

Fessenden & Brooks, Expressions of Care: How to Provide Grief Support,
The AutoEthnographer

Listen to Understand: please avoid interrupting, attempting to finish another's sentence, distracted listening like looking at your phone, engaging in side conversations, offering advice, attempting to speak for others, or comparing grief experiences. Instead, please allow people the time they need to express their ideas and please try to offer support through the validation of experiences.

Respect Different Communication Styles: please acknowledge how larger societal power dynamics are replicated even in smaller community spaces. Please strive to make this a space where everyone who would like to share has the opportunity to do so. Acknowledge that people process information differently and respond to information in a variety of ways—including through silence, tears, the need to move one's body and more. Eye contact while speaking or listening, for example, is not comfortable or comforting for all people. Sometimes behaviors like doodling are ways people process difficult information. Let's assume good intentions in listening and speaking behaviors. Let's also give ourselves and others grace when we make mistakes. If you unintentionally make a mistake or violate a guideline, try acknowledging the mistake, apologizing, and working to avoid the behavior that may have caused harm in the future.

Confidentiality: Personal information shared within our space should not travel outside of this space. Stories shared belong to the storyteller. Knowing that we are part of a shared community, please also take care to protect the anonymity of other people within the stories you share.

Care for Yourself: You should never feel compelled to share information about your lived experiences that you are not comfortable sharing; this includes the level of detail and what you choose to leave unspoken. The phrase "I pass" is a complete sentence with no explanation needed and this phrase can be invoked mid-sentence if you begin sharing and realize you no longer feel safe or able to do so. If you find a discussion too emotionally activating, you are free to exit our space at any time and reenter when you are able to do so. Again, no questions asked.

Care for Others: Attentive listening is a form of care; there is no need to respond to another's sharing—remember the acronym: Why Am I Talking (W.A.I.T.). Please respect the diversity of reactions to shared content, acknowledging that what we're learning or discussing might not be activating for you but it could be activating past feelings of grief for your classmates. Activation or "trigger warnings" are another form of care for others. Please offer them when possible and appropriate. The following topics are some examples of sensitive topics that people might benefit from being warned about in advance: Self Harm, Gun Violence, Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence, Police Brutality, Emotional Abuse, Child Abuse, Rape and/or Sexual Assault, Substance Use/Misuse or Abuse, Suicide.