



Considerations for Addressing Student Tragedies in Your Classes

Dealing with the death of a student in one of your classes is an often terrifying and tragic experience, not only for our students but for educators as well.

What follows are some suggestions for how to be with students when tragedy happens. These guidelines are not meant to be universal: you should go with your own level of comfort and a range of other factors. But we hope these suggestions give you some insights into dealing with these moments for students, but also how to give yourself the space and time you need.

Acknowledge the loss

We want to be seen as compassionate professionals, especially given our philosophy here at Marquette. In moments of tragedy, it is best to acknowledge the loss to our classes. Even if the student was not in your class, it's good to address the tragedy to students as many of your students may have known the deceased. This does not have to mean the dedication of an entire class period to that discussion; that might be too much of an ask for you and will likely be too uncomfortable for your students. A simple acknowledgement of the loss and an offer to be willing to talk outside of class or to help point students to resources on campus can be helpful.

Be kind and accommodating

We all react to grief and loss differently, and your students can have a range of responses to a tragedy. And for many of our students, this may be the first time they are dealing with an event like this. Be open to the different needs of students. Some may need extra space or a mental breather from class; others may need extra time for assignments. Others may reach out to you for help or just be looking for a way to process.

Balance accommodation with routine

While it is good to offer accommodation for students who need it, do caution against giving too much time away from work or assignments for students. Many students seek out a sense of normalcy during stressful times like these and may crave the routine to help them through.

Marquette Resources

[**COUNSELING CENTER GUIDE FOR FACULTY**](#)

[**COUNSELING CENTER'S RED FOLDER FOR RECOGNIZING STUDENT ISSUES**](#)

[**FABER CENTER FOR IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY**](#)
(individual consultations)

[**CAMPUS MINISTERS**](#) are available to anyone from the Marquette community who needs support following a death or other loss.

[**CENTER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING**](#) (individual consultations for faculty/instructors for both classroom related questions and personal grief)

EMAIL: ctl@marquette.edu
PHONE: (414) 288-0263

Be kind to yourself

For many of us, being a faculty member is not just simply our scholarship or teaching: we often become an outlet for students. And for many of us, we try to be as personally available to our students as we can. And that can be draining. Give yourself the same space and expectations you would give others and do not be afraid to engage in self-care for yourself.

Know your limitations

In turn, many of us are not trained counselors. We may not be able to provide students with the help they might need. Do not hesitate to direct students to campus resources or reach out to those resources directly if you feel a student is particularly struggling with the death of their classmate.

Consideration guiding your students through a Box Breathing Meditation.

1. Find a comfortable seated position and take a few deep breaths to relax.
2. Inhale through your nose slowly and deeply for a count of four.
3. Hold your breath for a count of four.
4. Exhale through your mouth slowly and fully for a count of four.
5. Hold your breath for a count of four.
6. Repeat steps 2 to 5 for several cycles or until you feel calm and relaxed.

It's important to focus on your breath and keep a steady pace throughout the exercise. You can practice box breathing anytime and anywhere, such as before a presentation, during a stressful moment, or as part of daily mindfulness practices.

Ignatian Resources

[PRAYER WHILE GRIEVING](#)

[NOW DISCERN THIS: THE
BIG FEELING EXAMEN](#)



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