

Possible Classroom Statement Following a Death

The following are suggestions for a classroom statement on the death of a student, faculty or staff member.

(Faculty should feel free to use any or all suggestions as they see fit, depending on the individual class. Keep in mind the reaction of the class - if students don't appear upset or seem to need extensive details or lengthy explanations, they probably don't, and there is no need to force an awkward discussion.)

Contact the Counseling Center with any questions: 724-836-9870; gaylep@pitt.edu

Announce that you want to share something before starting class.

Give a **brief** summary of the details:

- Student's/Faculty or Staff member's name and date, time, location of death.
- Any general comment from authorities as to cause or circumstances.
- Any official statement from administration or person's family.
- Funeral arrangements, etc. if known.
- Any early plans for campus memorial service if known.
- Facebook page if it exists and link.

Say something about what you enjoyed about knowing the person or her/his contributions to this campus.

If it is a student death - suggest that the death of a young person can be particularly difficult because it is not expected, and that this may be the first time some students have ever dealt with this kind of loss. Remind them that almost everything they're feeling is normal - it's very surreal to have someone who was healthy and vibrant just not be here anymore.

If it is a student death related to substance abuse **and only if it comes up in the discussion**, it could be a teachable moment to suggest that this is a real life example of why we want them to be careful with alcohol/drugs/driving behaviors - it truly can happen to anyone.

Offer handouts from the Counseling Center and remind students that the Counselor is available if they need someone to talk to in addition to their normal support system, or if they are worried about a friend who is not handling this well.

Depending on comfort level - open the discussion up for a few minutes if anyone has any questions or anything they want to share.

- If you're not sure what to say, say so! **Please do not attempt to counsel students.**
- It's best to be honest and say you're not sure but can help find someone who can answer.
- Be ready to wrap the conversation up if it seems like students are too upset and refer to the Counseling Center.

Feel free to contact the Counseling Center after your class to discuss any concerns you have.