

Grieving Graduation: How to Support Your Graduate

Under normal circumstances, May is a time that families get excited to celebrate their college student's academic achievements at commencement. However, we now find ourselves in an unprecedented time trying to manage unforeseen stressors. Below are some tips to support your graduate as well as comfort each other as a family.

- Given the climate of our world it is important to have conversations with your graduate about their experience and allow them to grieve the loss of all the benchmark experiences they will be deprived of because of COVID-19.
- Remember your graduate is an adult and try to empathically engage and listen to them in an adult manner.
- Do your best to affirm your graduate's experience. Try not to minimize their current experience or compare your graduate's experience to yourself or others that are grieving.
- Take the time to listen to your graduate's expectations for themselves and the expectations they may have of you as their main support.
- Respect their boundaries. Maybe they want to discuss feelings with you, and maybe they don't. Some graduates may not have the words to describe their experience. Offer them space to express themselves through alternate mediums such as music, art, poetry, or the internet.
- Be open to engaging your graduate in new ways like TikTok videos or taking the time to make a video recording with your graduate to post on social media.
- Encourage your graduate to commiserate with their friends and peers about their experiences as another sounding board.
- Create an alternate ritual that can celebrate their graduation! It may not be the traditional ceremony any of you were anticipating, but you can still find a way to mark the significance of the occasion. Find some ideas here: <https://www.collegiateparent.com/student-life/alternative-graduation-celebrations/>.