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For many, a slow return to normalcy

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In Philosophy professor Shelly Kagan's class "Death," the accident last Friday that killed four Yale students seemed impossible to avoid.

"In a class on civics, you could pass over it in silence," Kagan said. "In a class on death, to pass over the deaths of four students -- would have been weird and almost unthinkable or grotesque."

Kagan brought up the tragedy at the beginning of his philosophy class Tuesday, saying his wife sometimes came to him in times of grief looking to him for answers.

"Here I am, this great authority on death, and why don't I have anything helpful to say about this?" Kagan said. "And the fact is, I don't."

Instead, Kagan said he hoped the students killed in the accident had lived lives they could be proud of, that they would serve as an inspiration to their friends, and that their relatives would be comforted. Then, he moved into his lecture.

Like Kagan, students, faculty and administrators tried to make the difficult transition this week back to a normal routine. Classes resumed, games and events delayed because of the accident were rescheduled, and bereaved classmates tried to pick up the pieces of their lives.

Jason Cabico '04 said the atmosphere on campus last Friday was somber and that his residential college experienced a heightened sense of community. But he said the mood changed as the week progressed.

"I think that as tragic as it was, people aren't as sensitized to it now as they were at the beginning of the week," Cabico said. "There just wasn't the time to dwell on it."

Yale College Dean Richard Brodhead said he wanted administrators to have no illusions about the length of the grieving process.

"We spent a good deal of time talking about how this isn't something that's going to be over in a day or a week," Brodhead said. "We want people to understand how many places there are to turn to when the time comes and you need it."

Brodhead then listed a number of people who students could look to for advice, including college deans, freshman counselors, the Chaplain's office, coaches' offices, and the Mental Hygiene Department at University Health Services.