

UNDERSTANDING YOUR GRIEF

SOME SUGGESTIONS THAT MAY HELP

Grief is personal and individual. No one can tell you how to grieve. It is a journey you take and no two people will grieve the same way. It is important to give yourself, your family and your friends enough time to grieve.

There is no 'normal' length of time or the 'right' way to grieve. The feeling of loss does not go away but the intensity will ease. It may help to ask for support from family and friends. Ensure that you take care of your diet and get enough rest and 'time out'.

How you feel when you are bereaved will depend on the relationship you had with the person who has died and how you felt about them. You may also find that this death awakens feelings within you about other losses in your life.

The circumstances of how they died may affect how you feel. If a death comes after a long period of illness, you may feel relieved that their suffering has come to an end.

While the natural process of grieving will take time, it may help to know that strong feelings are normal and that it can help to cry and/or talk to others about how you feel.

It is impossible to predict the course of your grieving

Different people will deal with things differently.

Some people may be uncomfortable around you. Even people you know well may not know what to say around you or say things that surprise you or make you mad. They often feel they have to cheer you up or offer some wise words.

There will be 'Why's' and 'What if's' – accept that some things will never make sense to you and even if you get answers, they may not make things right or fair.

Grief doesn't come in neat stages, in fact there's not much about grief that's neat at all. It can come in waves, sometimes making you feel like you are drowning in emotions. Many people often feel like they are going crazy – these strong feelings will ease over time and it is often helpful to talk to a trusted friend.

In some cases, speaking to a specialist bereavement counsellor can help.

"There is sacredness in tears. They are not the mark of weakness, but of power. They speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues. They are the messengers of overwhelming grief, of deep contrition, and of unspeakable love"

Washington Irving



SOME SUGGESTIONS THAT OTHER BEREAVED PEOPLE HAVE FOUND HELPFUL

"No-one ever told me that grief felt so like fear" C. S. Lewis

- Allow yourself to cry – friends often feel awkward and encourage you to be strong but crying is okay and not crying is okay too
- Rest and if eating is difficult in the early days, just eat small easily digestible meals
- Limit the use of alcohol, tranquilizers and other mood altering drugs
- A little gentle exercise each day helps
- Share stories, thoughts and feelings about your loved one with family and friends
- Dispose of the deceased person's personal possessions when ready and if appropriate ask family and friends if there is anything they would like to keep as a memento
- Use rituals and customs that are meaningful to you e.g. continue to celebrate birthdays or anniversaries if you wish
- Draw on spiritual or religious beliefs if this is helpful to you
- Take time out to do things you would normally enjoy and things that could be relaxing and soothing
- It can be helpful to 'Just take one day at a time' – an old cliché but it can help you get through when difficult times seem overwhelming
- Try, if possible to put off making major decisions such as moving house or new relationships during the first 12 months following your loss
- It is not uncommon to experience feelings of depression and anxiety but with careful management, personal insight and the understanding and support of others, even the most depressive of feelings can pass
- Time does not heal – it just moves on and it is often easier if you can just go with it
- Even if death is expected, it may still seem sudden. Although you may have felt prepared and said good bye, nothing prepares you for the moment

Useful Resources

24hr telephone counselling

Lifeline: 131114

Mensline: 1300789978

Kids Helpline: 1800551800

Websites

Web Healing

www.webhealing.com – for those seeking support on line

Compassionate Friends NSW

www.thecompassionatefriends.org.au

Solace

www.solace.org.au – for widows and widowers

Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement

www.grief.org.au – provides support services around grief and bereavement

Department of Human Services

<http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/subjects/what-to-do-following-a-death>

Local Resources/Contact Information