

Coping with grief

Information for people living in Northern Sydney

Grief is a normal and healthy reaction to the death of a person close to you. There are no right or wrong ways to grieve. There are no timelines.

Common grief responses

After a death, we may experience a range of feelings, such as shock, sadness, anger, guilt or despair, as well as relief, hope and acceptance. Grief is likely to be more intense when the person has been central to our life. It can affect our concentration and thinking. It may cause physical symptoms such as difficulty in sleeping, headaches or loss of appetite.

Grief is an individual experience

Everyone grieves in their own way. We do not always know how people are grieving by what we see. Some people are open and express their grief, crying and want to talk. Others are more private, may be reluctant to talk and prefer to keep busy. It's important to respect each other's way of grieving, even if we don't necessarily understand it.

Grief doesn't have a timeline

Grief may be constant or intermittent. It may be triggered at any time by thoughts, objects, people, places or sounds. It's not unusual for grief to be felt over an extended period of time. It's okay to admit you are experiencing grief, whether it be weeks, months, years or even decades after the death.

Life grows around grief

It is a common myth that people 'get over' grief. With time, the pain will lessen, but the sorrow we feel may always be part of us. When people grieve they are coming to terms with what has changed in their lives. There is no 'return to normal'; rather, we have to learn to live around a new kind of normal, re-learning the world and ourselves within it.

Looking after yourself

Taking the time to look after yourself can make a big difference in your ability to function on a day-to-day basis. Here are some suggestions:

Allow yourself to express your thoughts and feelings privately: perhaps a special place to think, write, or cry; collect photographs, listen to special music, or light a candle; take exercise; explore other people's experiences through books, videos or articles.

Sharing with other people can reduce the sense of isolation and loneliness that comes with grief: allow people to help if needed; talk to family and friends; consider joining a support group with others in a similar situation; talk with a grief counsellor to focus on your unique situation.

When to seek help

Although grief can be very painful, many people find that with the support of their family and friends and their own resources, they gradually find ways to learn to live with their loss and do not need to seek professional help.

Sometimes however, the circumstances of dying or death may have been particularly distressing, or there may be circumstances in your life which make your grief particularly acute or complicated. If you are finding it difficult to manage on a day-to-day basis, it may be helpful to see your GP or a grief counsellor. It's okay to admit you are struggling with your grief. No-one will think any less of you if you ask for help along the way.

Information and services for adults and children are listed overleaf →

Grief Information and Services

Detailed information about adult and child grief is on the web sites of these organisations. If you don't use the web, people known to you, or your local library, may be able to assist with printing some documents.

Service	Phone	Website/Email
Aboriginal Counselling: provides intervention and therapeutic counselling for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, individuals and communities in NSW.	0410 539 905	 www.aboriginalcounsellingservices.com.au/services
Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement: fact sheets, online support groups, counselling, online telehealth.	1800 642 066	 www.grief.org.au  info@grief.org.au
National Centre for Childhood Grief: for children and adults. Printed and online information, support groups in person, counselling in person, online or telephone (free for children).	1300 654 556	 childhoodgrief.org.au/how-we-help/counselling  info@childhoodgrief.org.au
National Association for Loss and Grief (NSW): telephone support (free), online information.	02 6882 9222	 www.nalag.org.au/grief-support  info@nalag.org.au
What's your Grief: in-depth library online with written, audio and course information.		 whatsyourgrief.com/resources/?resource_type=grieving
Hammond Care: free counselling in person, online telehealth or telephone for family/friends of someone who has died and was known to a palliative care service. Printed and online information, walking and online bereavement support groups.	1800 427 255	 www.hammond.com.au/services/palliative-centre/bereavement  bereavement@hammond.com.au
Griefline: free telephone helpline and counselling, community forums, online information.	1300 845 745	 griefline.org.au
Red Nose: support after the death of a baby/child. Free telephone helpline and counselling, peer and group support, in-depth library online.	1300 308 307	 rednosegriefandloss.org.au  support@rednose.org.au
Beyond Blue: 24/7 crisis support	1300 224 636	 www.beyondblue.org.au
Lifeline: 24/7 crisis support Lifeline: grief and loss group at Balgowlah	13 11 14 02 9949 5522	 lifelinedirect.org.au  lifelinenb.org.au/get-help/support-groups/grief-loss-support-group  admin@lifelinenb.org.au
Good Grief: education programs for children and adults at North Sydney, 4-8 sessions.	1300 379 569	 www.goodgrief.org.au/seasons-growth-fact-sheet-landing-page  info@goodgrief.org.au
Quest for Life: Living with Grief weekend, at Bundanoon, annually.	1300 941 488	 questforlife.org.au  programs@questforlife.com.au
Solace: peer support group for widows and widowers, at Castle Hill, bi-monthly evening sessions.	02 9519 2820	 www.solace.org.au/branches/nsw  SolaceNSW@gmail.com
The Compassionate Friends NS peer support groups for grief after the death of a child, various locations.	1800 671 621	 www.tcfnsw.org.au/support/support-information  admin@tcfnsw.org.au
Videos: search for 'TED talks on grief' or similar as a starting point		Libraries and bookshops: printed and audio books on grief.