

Seeking help for grief, loss and trauma

Traumatic incidents can occur in our lives, and result in experiences of grief and loss. People can react in a variety of ways to these experiences.

People may experience sadness, shock, disbelief, anger, sleep disturbance, fear or anxiety. Everyone responds differently to trauma, grief and loss; the responses they have in situations like this are often very different to their normal responses. The response may be experienced immediately or sometimes much later.

There is no 'right' way to react, or to grieve. It's an individual process in every way - the behaviours, emotions, actions, needs, and timing. Things people say have been helpful in the healing process include writing a goodbye letter to the person; escaping by listening to music, surfing or running; writing out or drawing how you feel; talking to someone because even though it doesn't bring the person back it feels good to let it out; being kind to yourself and giving yourself time.

Having distressing thoughts and feelings after such events is normal. However, when these responses persist or significantly impact on your ability to return to your usual activities it may be necessary to seek additional supports.

In particular, children absorb the tension, uncertainty, confusion and fear around them following traumatic events. Try to create a sense of calm. Reassure children that they are safe and that there is someone there to take care of them.

Recovery from exposure to traumatic events is often helped by talking it over with others. People who readily use formal and informal support from family, friends, clergy or other supports generally recover better from stressful situations.

Seeking help

If you experience persistent issues that interfere with your life you are encouraged to talk to your General Practitioner or health care provider.

Good places to go for information online include:

National Association for Loss and Grief (NALAG): www.nalag.org.au

Black Dog Institute: www.blackdoginstitute.org.au

Beyond Blue: www.beyondblue.org.au

The Grief Support Line is provided by the National Association for Loss and Grief, who provide a telephone based support service. Phone 02 9489 6644 or 0439 922 201 and they will call you back. This is not a crisis line.

Urgent help: If you, or someone you know, need urgent help, and life is in danger, call triple zero (000) and ask for ambulance, police or both. They will take you to hospital.

For young people

headspace is designed to make it easy as possible for a young person, aged 12 – 25, and their family to get the help they need for problems affecting their wellbeing, focusing on four core areas: mental health, physical health, work and study support and alcohol and other drug services. In our local area we have two **headspace** centres. There's a centre at Brookvale, in Brookvale House at Warringah Mall (near Bunnings), which you can phone on 9937 6500. There's also a centre at Chatswood, behind the Westfield, which you can phone on 8021 3668. These centres are open Monday to Friday, 9am – 5.30pm.

Child & Youth Mental Health Services are available across the District. The details can be found in the service directory on the NSLHD webpage:

www.nslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/Services/Directory/Pages/child-adolescent.aspx

YouthSource is a free app and webpage that has a full directory of services available to young people in the Northern Sydney region, and can be accessed here: www.youthsource.com.au

Online counselling is available nationally via **eheadspace**. Services are available from 9am – 1am, seven days, via phoning 1800 650 890 or online for online counselling at www.headspace.org.au

Kids Helpline is available 24 hours, and is a free call on 1800 55 1800.

Youth Beyond Blue offers online information and support specifically for young people: www.youthbeyondblue.com

Reachout.com – have information sheets, online forums and provide information about apps that can help you manage: <http://au.reachout.com>

Urgent help: If you, or someone you know, need urgent help, and life is in danger, call triple zero (000) and ask for ambulance, police or both. They will take you to hospital.

For adults

Lifeline is available 24 hours and is a free call on 13 11 14.

Mental Health Line: If you are in NSW and need to be connected with your local mental health service, you can free call the Mental Health Line on 1800 011 511. Calls are answered 24 hours by a clinician who can offer support and connect you with the appropriate service. This service is for anyone needing advice around connecting with the mental health service, including consumers, friends and family, and other health professionals.

Urgent help: If you, or someone you know, need urgent help, and life is in danger, call triple zero (000) and ask for ambulance, police or both. They will take you to hospital.

Further information and resources on [mental health impacts](#) is available on the NSW Health website.

Supporting others

Supporting someone through their grief isn't easy. The things you can do to help include being a good, non-judgemental listener; crying together; giving them time; maintaining contact especially on anniversaries and special days like Christmas and birthdays; and being a good friend.

These links provide short summaries about providing support:

National Association for Loss and Grief (NALAG) has a number of informative, easy to read brochures: www.nalag.org.au/Brochures.htm

How to support grieving adolescents:

www.grief.org.au/grief_and_bereavement_support/understanding_grief/supporting_adolescents

How to support grieving adults:

www.grief.org.au/grief_and_bereavement_support/understanding_grief/supporting_adults_1

For more detailed information, this booklet is a great resource for supporting children and young people. It provides a comprehensive explanation of what to expect and how to provide support:

www.earlytraumagrief.anu.edu.au/files/ACATLGN_Raphael_GriefLoss_D1.pdf

Other resources are also available through:

www.earlytraumagrief.anu.edu.au/resource-centre

Drugs & Alcohol

People cope with grief and loss in different ways. Some people use drugs or alcohol, and sometimes to the extreme. If you are worried about someone's use, here's where you can access information, support and get connected with services:

ADIS: free call Australian Drug Information Service (ADIS) on 1800 422 599. Calls are answered by a health worker 24 hours, who can provide counselling, information, support and connect with you with local services.

Drug & Alcohol services are available throughout Northern Sydney, they can be found on our webpage: www.nslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/Services/Directory/Pages/Drug-Alcohol.aspx or by calling 1300 889 788 during business hours.

NSW Health Information: www.yourroom.com provides lots of information about all aspects of drug and alcohol use.

Overdose: It may also be useful to know the signs of an overdose – one of them is unusual snoring. See www.overdoseday.com for more information, or download the free Australian app, 'Overdose Aware' from the app store: www.overdoseday.com/resources/overdose-aware-app-2

This information sheet is also available on our website:

www.nslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/Services/Directory/Pages/Mental-Health.aspx