
Coping With Loss

What is Grief?

By definition, to grieve is to feel deep sorrow. Everyone who loves is vulnerable to the pain of grief, for love means attachment, and all human attachments are subject to loss. Grief is a process, not a state and is a natural response to loss. The degree of grief depends on your relationship with the deceased.

What are the signs of grief?




Bereaved family members and friends experience some of the following symptoms: disbelief, shock, numbness, denial, sadness, anxiety, guilt, depression, anger, loneliness or frustration. Physical symptoms of grief can include: tightness of the chest or throat, pain in the heart area, panic attacks, dizziness or trembling.

Will I ever stop crying?

Even though it may be difficult to believe, the tears will come to an end eventually. Even after the intense crying ceases, there may be times when hearing a favourite song or seeing a special place will bring a moment of sadness along with a tear.

What should I say to a grieving person?

It's very difficult to know what to say to someone who is grieving. Saying something like, "I'm sorry" is simple but can mean so much. They often just need someone to talk to, someone to share their feelings and memories with.

-  **DO** talk about the person who's passed away – this helps the reality of the loss to sink in which is an important part of grieving. **DO** offer practical help like minding children, doing groceries, cooking meals, doing household chores. This type of assistance is important not just in the days straight after the death but in the months to come when the real effect of the death is often the hardest to deal with
-  **DON'T** say "I know how you feel" as you can never know or understand another person's feelings
-  **DON'T** forget special days like birthdays, anniversaries or Christmas as these can be very lonely occasions when someone special has died.



Looking after yourself

When there is a death, you may find the following helpful:

- Don't rush into organising everything yourself
- Accept support and help from family, counsellors and the community (for example, your church group or your local doctor)
- Call your funeral director for their support and direction
- Talk about the life of the deceased. Share stories of your relationship with the deceased with family and friends
- Write your own thoughts down in a journal
- Encourage young children to write or draw their memories of the deceased.

Coping with Grief

One of the best ways to begin working through grief is to attend the funeral. A funeral confirms the reality of death and serves as a focus for expressing feelings of loss. Funerals also stimulate mourners to begin talking about the deceased, one of the first steps towards accepting the death.

Both before and after the funeral, it is important that you express your feelings:

- Take time to cry and don't be afraid to share your tears with other mourners.
- Talk openly with family members and friends.
- Don't try to 'protect' other family members by hiding your sadness, it helps them as much as it does you.
- Express your anger if you are feeling it.
- This is the time to lean on friends. They may feel awkward for a while because they don't know how to talk to you about your loss. But you can help them help you by simply telling them what you need.

Remember that as time goes on, your grief will diminish. This does not mean you will forget your loved one; it means you accept the death and can no longer enjoy the deceased person's physical presence. But they will still be part of your life. Even though your relationship with your loved one has changed forever, its existence and feeling live on forever.



Contact Numbers

The following can be contacted for assistance:

Wollongong Hospital	4222 5000
Shellharbour Hospital	4296 6666
Relationship Australia	4228 7711
Anglicare	4229 7911
Centacare Catholic Family Counselling Service	4227 1122
Anglican Counselling Service	4228 9612
Lifeline	13 11 14
S.A.N.D.S (Stillbirth, Neo-natal Death and Miscarriage Support)	4271 2292

