



BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT

SOUTHERN CROSS HOUSING FACT SHEET

WHAT ARE GRIEF AND LOSS?

Grief is a natural response to loss and can be experienced if you lose a loved one, end a relationship or your children leave home. The more significant the loss, the more intense the grief is likely to be.

RECOGNISING THE SYMPTOMS

The loss of someone close to you can lead to intense feelings of sadness which can be overwhelming. The feelings can shift in the level of emotional pain and often these emotions are experienced as physical symptoms. Here are some of the physical symptoms that are associated with grief:

- Extreme tiredness
- Heart palpitations
- Dizziness
- Yawning
- Feeling distracted
- Finding it hard to follow conversations
- Forgetfulness
- Headaches
- Stomach cramps
- Butterflies in the stomach
- Overall body tension
- Nausea
- Loss of appetite
- Sleeping for long periods of time
- Feeling very foggy
- Inability to relax

HOW TO COPE

When we lose a loved one it can seem that there is no way of managing our levels of distress. People experience grief differently and so there is no one remedy for every person's grief, however, there are some strategies that you can use.

- ✓ Reach out to family, friends, workmates, community members but permit yourself to retreat when you need to be alone.
- ✓ Take the initiative to reach out to people who have experienced a similar loss – they might be from social groups, sporting clubs, church groups, in the workplace or community.
- ✓ Seek help from a mental health professional if needed.
- ✓ If someone asks you RUOK? there is no shame in being honest. Most people want to help.
- ✓ Adapt your old routines to the changes in your life. Establish new daily routines that ensure you have a healthy diet, good hygiene, adequate sleep, and are attending to your medical care.
- ✓ Avoid excessive consumption of alcohol, prescription or illicit drugs, smoking and caffeine.
- ✓ Rather than avoiding life engage in it. Occupy your time with meaningful activities such as work, hobbies, sports, arts and crafts.
- ✓ Express your thoughts and feelings. You can use the written word such as journaling, poetry or letter writing, or other expressive ways such as painting, photography, scrapbooking, dance and music.

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HOW TO SUPPORT SOMEONE

If you need to support someone that is grieving it is important to know that everyone grieves differently and expresses it in different ways and in different time frames. Below are some tips that can assist you to be supportive.

Listen: Listening is more important than talking. Being an active and compassionate listener can provide a person with the support they need.

Keep an open mind: Do not judge a person for their feelings. Ensure the person feels comfortable expressing their emotions. There are no wrong feelings. Understand that a person's culture or beliefs may affect how they respond to grief and trauma.

Time: Acknowledge that there is no set timeline or process for grieving. Everyone grieves in their own way and in their own time. Sometimes grief can be delayed or prolonged.

Check-in: The process of grieving can happen over years, not days. While the early days of grief may require friends and family to be more hands-on, a grieving person may need different types of support for a long while. Make sure you check in regularly to see how the person is going and reassure them you're still there.

SUGGESTIONS FOR WHAT TO SAY

Acknowledge the situation and let them know you care – *"I was really sad to hear about..."*

Offer your support – *"What can I do to help? Do you feel like talking?"*

Be genuine and honest – *"I'm not sure what to say or do, but I want you to know I am here for you"*.

ASSISTANCE

Lifeline: 24/7 telephone support crisis line and online crisis support **13 11 14**

Beyond Blue: 24/7 telephone support and online chat service to support mental health **1300 224 636**

Red Nose: 24/7 online and telephone services to assist parents and their families after the death of a child **1300 308 307**

