

Grief and loss tip sheet

What is grief?

Grief is our response to loss, especially the death of someone we love. It can also follow other major losses. Grief can affect your thoughts, feelings, behaviour, beliefs, physical health and relationships. There is no single right way to grieve, and grief does not follow set stages or a timeline. Feelings may come and go in waves, and can be stronger around anniversaries, birthdays or holidays.

Common signs

Grief can bring a wide range of reactions. Some people notice:

- Sadness, numbness or shock
- Anger, guilt or regret
- Anxiety or panic
- Trouble sleeping
- Changes in appetite
- Difficulty concentrating
- Loneliness
- Relief, especially after a long illness

Things that may help

Different strategies suit different people. You may like to try a few of these and notice what helps.

Allowing feelings

Crying is a natural response to intense feelings, and so is not crying. Some people find it helps to allow feelings rather than push them away.

Make time for your grief

Some people find it helpful to set aside quiet time to reflect, look at photos, write in a journal, or take part in a religious or spiritual practice.

Looking after the body

Grief affects the body as well as the mind. Eating regularly, staying active and making time to rest may help.

Alcohol and drugs

Alcohol, cigarettes and other drugs may dull pain briefly, but can bring other difficulties. A GP can talk with you about any questions.

Leaning on others

Friends, family, workmates, support groups and community or faith groups can offer comfort and practical help.

Remembering a loved one

Some people write a letter, plant a tree, make a photo album or mark special dates to keep a connection with the person who died.

Things that **may help** (continued)

Hard days

Anniversaries and special occasions can bring grief back strongly. Some people find planning ahead and having support around them helpful.

Self kindness

There is no right way or timeline for grief, and being gentle with yourself about how you are coping may help.

When to get **more support**

If things are becoming unmanageable and affecting your social, family, work or study life, you may want to see your GP or a psychologist. You do not need to wait until things feel serious to reach out.

Most people gradually find ways to live with their loss with support from family, friends and their own resources. Sometimes grief can feel particularly intense or complicated, for example after a sudden or traumatic death. A GP, psychologist or bereavement counsellor can offer support and help you find services.

Benefits of **seeking support**

- Talking with a GP or psychologist may help you make sense of what is happening.
- Support might help you feel less alone with what you are going through.
- A psychologist could offer new ways of coping that suit you.
- A space to talk about your loss may help you find your own way through grief.

Need help **right now?**

If you or someone else is in danger or thinking about suicide, please reach out now.

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Emergency services, if life is in danger

13 11 14

Lifeline crisis support, 24 hours, 7 days

13 92 76

13YARN, run by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, 24/7

Trusted **Australian resources**

Griefline 1300 845 745

Better Health Channel betterhealth.vic.gov.au

healthdirect healthdirect.gov.au | 1800 022 222

This tip sheet offers general information only and does not replace advice from your GP, psychologist or other health professional.