



# Grief



## What is grief?

Grief is a natural response you experience when you lose someone close to you. Grieving is a normal part of life and there is no right way to grieve – everyone is different. It can begin as soon as you become aware of a loss and can continue over the course of the first 12 months.



Although there are many different kinds of 'loss', this fact sheet looks at grief after the death of someone close.

## Feelings of grief

Grief can affect you in many different ways; how you think, what you feel and how you spend your time. You might experience:

**Shock and disbelief** that the person has died

**Longing for the person;** wishing they were around, to be able to touch them or be comforted by them

**Anger or resentment for being abandoned,** for the unfairness of the loss, or towards those seen as responsible for the loss

**Sadness** that the person has gone

**Guilt** that you were unable to save the person or that you survived while they did not

**Anxiety about the future;** about how things will be without your loved one or about your own safety

**Difficulty thinking about anything else;** always thinking about the person you have lost

**Difficulty concentrating and remembering things**

**Changes to your sleep patterns and appetite**

**Physical changes** including headaches, feeling tired, muscle aches and nausea.

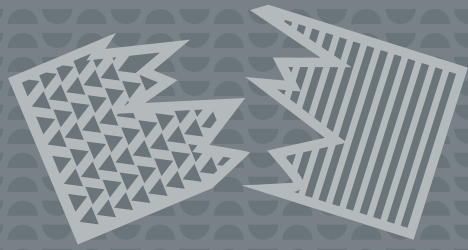


## Experiencing grief

If you are experiencing grief, try not to stress too much about what's "normal". Everyone goes through grief differently and should be able to grieve at their own pace and in their own way.



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## Things that can help in managing grief

It's important to do what's right for you. Some things that might help include:



**Accepting your feelings.** It's okay to feel sad about losing someone special and to take time to cope with what has happened. Losing someone is stressful and upsetting, and it's normal to experience strong emotions.



**Allowing yourself time to grieve** and if you can, let yourself cry. You might need a safe place at home or at school to go when you're especially sad.



**Taking time out.** Being around other people can sometimes be stressful and overwhelming, especially if they are also grieving. Go for a walk, listen to some music, sit in a park or do something enjoyable like shopping or going to a movie.



**Looking after yourself** is really important so try to keep regular routines of sleep, eating and exercise. These things can feel hard to keep up but they can improve how you think, and how you feel.



**Collecting memories of your loved one** and expressing your feelings in a way that feels right for you. Perhaps write about them and the things you did with them. Collect photos, make a scrap book or journal, create a website or blog, write music or poetry, or create some artwork.



**Finding a way to say goodbye in your own way** and in your own time. This might mean going to the funeral, writing them a letter or having a memorial service.



**Allowing yourself to feel happy** and to move on with your life without feeling guilty. People sometimes feel bad if they let themselves smile or if they seem to be moving on; it doesn't mean that you have forgotten the person you have lost. Your loved one would have wanted good things in your life.



**Planning for times that may be hard**, like Christmas, birthdays or anniversaries. Perhaps arrange to spend time with friends or do something enjoyable for yourself.



**Finding your own way to stay connected**, honour and remember the person who has died.

## Finding help

Grief is an experience that can last for weeks, months or over a year. Learning to live with the loss can take time and you may experience ups and downs in the process.

If your grief is continuing for a long time, is very upsetting or is stopping you from getting on with life, or you are grieving for someone who has died by suicide then it's important to get help. Getting the right support can help you get back on track sooner and help you to learn to live with your loss.

It's important to find someone you trust and feel comfortable with. There are general practitioners (GPs) and other health professionals who are experienced in working with young people who have experienced grief and loss.

A good place to start might be your local community health centre or **headspace** centre. You could talk with a trusted friend, teacher or family member about finding some help. It's important to remember that you don't need to talk about the details of the experience if you don't feel comfortable or safe to do so.



**headspace**

National Youth Mental Health Foundation

For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](https://www.headspace.org.au)