

## Resources for Support

If you are concerned about what is happening to you, please contact one of the following during the hours of 9.00 am – 5.00 pm, Monday-Friday (excluding public holidays):

Bereavement Coordinator

☎ (02) 9903 8333

Greenwich Chaplain or Social Worker

☎ (02) 9903 8333

Neringah Chaplain or Social Worker

☎ (02) 9488 2200

Northern Beaches Chaplain or Social Worker

☎ (02) 9998 0222

## Suggested Reading & Websites

- *Coping with Grief* - Mal McKissock
- *A Grief Observed* - C.S. Lewis

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- National Association for Loss & Grief  
☎ (02) 6882 9222  
[www.nalag.org.au](http://www.nalag.org.au)
- Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement  
☎ (03) 9265 2111 (or 1300 664 786)  
[www.grief.org.au](http://www.grief.org.au)
- Bereavement Care Centre  
☎ 1300 654 556  
[www.bereavementcare.com.au](http://www.bereavementcare.com.au)
- National Centre for Childhood Grief  
☎ 1300 654 556  
[www.childhoodgrief.org.au](http://www.childhoodgrief.org.au)
- Solace (for widows and widowers)  
☎ (02) 9519 2820  
[www.solace.org.au](http://www.solace.org.au)
- Compassionate Friends ☎ (02) 9290 2355  
[thecompassionatefriends.org.au](http://thecompassionatefriends.org.au)

*Your local library will possibly have a range of books on loss, grief and bereavement, including some that are suitable for children.*

Other Hope Healthcare Grief related pamphlets:

- *Coping with Anniversaries*
- *Children & Grief*

# Understanding Grief



## Grief - What is it?

Grief is a simple word used to describe the natural responses we have when facing a loss. The process of grief however is not a simple matter. When you are grieving, your reactions may be complex, threatening, often bewildering and, at times, misunderstood by others.

At the time of the death of your loved one, you might have felt shock, numbness and even disbelief. Some weeks later, when you think you should be getting over the death, you may feel things are even worse.

It is natural to feel this way. Over the coming months it may seem as if you are on a roller-coaster experiencing sudden times of grief and sadness when least expected.

## What can I expect?

The experiences of grief are many and varied and each family member may grieve differently. You can expect a number of reactions.

### Physical Reactions

You may experience fatigue, loss or increase in appetite, sleeplessness, tightness in the chest or throat, palpitations, shortness of breath, gastro-intestinal upset and sexual difficulties. It is important that you discuss any physical symptoms with your doctor.

### Emotional and Psychological Responses

Shock, sadness, anxiety, anger, guilt, despair, relief, confusion, loneliness, forgetfulness and poor concentration are common. You may feel you are going "crazy". It is not unusual to dream about, smell or sense the presence of the person who has died.

### Spiritual Responses

You may struggle with the meaning of your life and question your beliefs and values. Your spiritual beliefs may be a support for you or you may feel angry with God about what has happened.

## How long does it take?

Over the coming months you will find that the pain will decrease and the feelings will be less intense. You can expect that your grief will take longer to resolve than most people think it should and will take more energy than you can imagine. The time it takes will be different for everyone.

Days of special meaning such as birthdays, anniversaries and Christmas may be especially difficult.

## What can help?

When you are grieving it is important that you look after yourself. Try to eat a couple of small nutritious meals every day, even if you have little appetite. Go out into the fresh air and take a walk each day and get as much rest as possible. Slow down and

give yourself permission to let go of some of your responsibilities for a time. Give yourself permission to go out and treat yourself to something you enjoy.

Avoid overuse of drugs or alcohol as they can delay or stop the healing process.

Wherever possible, put off making major decisions such as moving house or new relationships.

## Ongoing Support

Family and friends can be a great support but may be uncomfortable about how best to help you. Remember they may be grieving too. Encourage them to let you grieve in your own way and in your own time. Tell people what you find helpful.

A relative or friend who can listen, without criticism or judgement, and without telling you how you should feel and what you should do, is possibly your most valuable source of comfort at this time.

There are others who can help as well. You may gain support from your doctor, clergy, a bereavement counsellor or through community organisations (see suggestions on back page).