

Inability to return to normal activities

Although by now we have been through the worst of the emotional upheaval, it may still be difficult to return to normal activity. We may become apathetic and lacking in energy, but this is usually temporary.

It does help if we can share our memories with others by talking about the life and death of the deceased.

The light at the end of the tunnel

Gradually we can now start picking up the threads and some of the activities we enjoyed before and try to re-establish a life that has some meaning.

There is no one time frame for this process of adjustment. It is important to allow plenty of time.

Don't be afraid to ask for help

It may be helpful to talk to someone who has had training in the area of grief and who is able to assist in finding healthy approaches to grief. Special bereavement counsellors may be reached through AFDA funeral directors. Understanding clergy may also be of assistance.

How we can help those who are grieving

Grieving people need someone to listen, and all the care, encouragement and support they can get to help them re-establish their lives.

Some of their most important needs are:

- the need to feel SUPPORT
- the need to face REALITY
- the need to express FEELINGS
- the need to move towards RE-ESTABLISHMENT and GO ON LIVING

In other words, TO HELP A FRIEND IN GRIEF, we need to be:

- AWARE - working through grief is a normal and necessary part of life.
- THERE - we can't solve this problem, but just being around to listen and provide support will help.
- SENSITIVE - our friends have suffered a deep loss, even if we don't see it as such. We need to journey with them through their pain, not try to take it away.
- HUMAN - we need to allow our friends to openly express all their feelings without judging them. Nobody has to justify their feelings - they are quite normal!
- READY - to listen when the story is told over and over again. Talking about the deceased by name is a vital step towards recovery.
- PATIENT - mourning the loss of a loved one takes as much time as it takes.

Australian Funeral Directors Association

When faced with having to make funeral arrangements, most people have no prior experience in organising such an event, and little knowledge of what to do.

Funeral directors can alleviate this burden for you by providing a range of services, allowing you to choose an appropriate funeral that will be conducted professionally, and with dignity.

For your own peace of mind, select a funeral director who is an accredited member of the Australian Funeral Directors Association which requires its members to honour a strict code of ethics and practice.

The AFDA publishes a range of information brochures for the bereaved. These brochures along with other help and advice is available through AFDA offices:

National Office: Telephone (03) 9859 9966

Or your nearest AFDA member.

A Gentle Touch Funerals
73 Railway Street
Mudgeeraba QLD 4213
Ph: 07 5522 0099

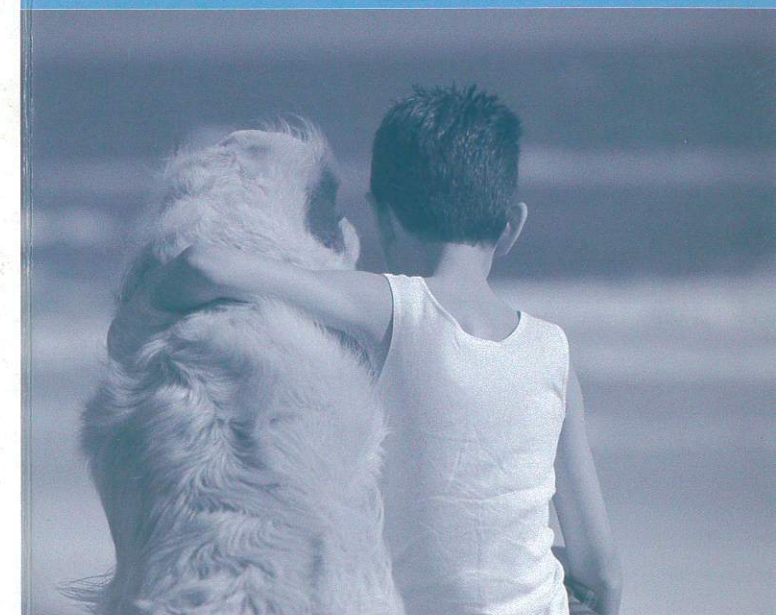


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It's alright to cry

A survival guide for the bereaved



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Whenever we are confronted by a loss, particularly the loss of bereavement, we may experience a range of strong human emotions. This is grief. When someone who has shared part of our life dies, whether a family member or a close friend, the emotions we feel can leave us desolate and confused.

This is normal, it happens to everyone - and it's quite alright to feel emotionally devastated.

Grief is the natural response to a significant loss. It is not just a temporary state of mind.

We are often surprised at the complexity, strength and familiarity of our own reactions.

Many people find it difficult to grieve in today's society, but we can grow as human beings if we are allowed to grieve fully.

Grief affects us physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. Here are some of the most common reactions:

Shock - disbelief

Shock may be our first reaction to the news of the death of a loved one, and it is often with total disbelief if that death is sudden.

Shock is the body's way of coping with traumatic situations in life. It is a period that allows us time to gather our resources.

Emotional release - It's alright to cry!

The pain of the loss can be intense, and it is natural for that emotion to find release through crying.

For various reasons, many men find it difficult to cry. But holding in our emotions indefinitely can make the recovery more difficult.

Loneliness - feeling low

Almost everyone feels this loneliness, a sense of complete separation from the person who is no longer alive. We feel really low in spirits and don't know what to do or where to go to find relief.

It is important to realise that this is normal. It's alright to feel low and alone, even if we have plenty of family and friends around to support us.

Physical symptoms of distress

The pressures of coping with bereavement may sometimes cause our bodies to react in the form of headaches, backaches, asthma or some other illness, sometimes even reflecting the symptoms of the deceased.

A visit to the doctor may be wise, but often it is just nature's way of telling us to "take it easy for a while" until we can get our whole bodies back into gear again.

Pining - unable to cope with today

The friendship and pleasures which we shared with the deceased may pre-occupy us - nothing else seems to give us comfort!

It is important to recognise our own capabilities and strengths, and keep connections with family and friends.

Many people fear that they may be going "crazy" with their grief, but knowing that this is a normal human reaction which is part of the recovery process will help us through this pain.

Now is the time to reach out to other people - it's not that easy to do but it is important to keep trying.

Relief

Many people closely involved with a person who was ill for some time before death, can find themselves emotionally drained and physically exhausted.

For many there is a feeling of relief that the deceased's pain and suffering has finally ended. It's alright to feel relieved - it's quite normal.

Sense of guilt

When we have lost someone who was dear to us, many of us take on the blame for what has happened.

"But I only spoke to him yesterday!" "I could have tried to stop her driving that night!" "If only I had been there!" These are all typical reactions to the death and all quite normal.

It is important to talk through the feelings of guilt and this will normally mean they diminish or disappear.

Anger

Many of us can experience intense anger: towards the person who has died - "How could he leave me like this?"; towards the medical profession - "Why didn't the doctors save her?"; and even towards God - "If He is a loving God, how could He let them die?"

It's alright to feel angry. It's quite normal and it is important not to suppress these feelings. It is also important not to let our anger get out of control, but to direct it in a positive way.

Where possible, sharing these feelings with a compassionate listener will help.