

Helping someone who is grieving

Be a good listener

Grieving people need to talk about their loss, acknowledge that they have been through a difficult experience. You can't fix their grief but you can be there, hear their story, and share their journey.

Be a shoulder to cry on

Allow them to cry with you, crying helps the release of emotions and this helps with healing.

Be in touch with them

Drop in, call on the telephone and say "I was thinking of you today" write a letter, send an email, remember special days like Christmas, birthdays and anniversaries.

When someone has experienced a loss, there will be big and small adjustments to be made in their lives. These could bring uncertainty, frustration, fear, sadness and change as each new day comes along. Grief is about adapting to change in life, thoughts, hopes, beliefs and the future.

Be a friend

Often being there is all that is needed to support someone who is grieving.

(Adapted from the writings of Doris Zagdanski)

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Men's Grief

When a mate needs a hand
to cope with loss and grief

Coping with Loss and Grief

Grief is the deep sorrow or distress that follows loss - of a loved one, job, health, pet, independence, divorce.

What does grief involve?

A range of feelings, physical symptoms, thoughts and behaviours may be encountered during grief:

- feelings of anger, anxiety, immense sadness, loneliness, guilt, frustration and helplessness
- disbelief and confusion, preoccupation with dying
- loss of hope and dreams;
- focus upon missed opportunities;
- loss of appetite, sleeplessness and headaches.

Someone who is bereaved may also envisage the deceased person as real, dream of them, and perhaps have conversations with them.

Other signs of difficulty with grief include:

- A change in routine behaviour e.g. socialising, sport.
- Not looking after themselves or their appearance
- Excessive consumption of alcohol Cutting themselves off from others and not attending social and family occasions

Who grieves?

Everyone grieves in their own unique way. Responses may be brief or long lasting, and they may recur. The experience will be different for everyone. Try not to take the person's reactions to the loss personally.

Sometimes people wrongly assume that a person's past experiences with loss makes them better able to cope with another.

How do men cope?

Some men:

- feel they need to express their grief by actively doing something;
- feel embarrassed to cry openly or talk about their loss and grief;
- attempt to suppress their grief, and put on a brave face for fear of being seen as weak;
- may not want to admit they need help, and try to maintain their independence
- overuse alcohol as a release from their pain;
- do not eat properly, or take proper care of themselves.

Who can help?

It is important to allow the person to handle things in their own way. Where possible, support them to do things for themselves. The person should be encouraged to talk with mates, friends, family or someone they trust. They may benefit from speaking with a

Minister of religion or their doctor. Counsellors can provide additional information, advice and support.

What can I do to help?

There are many things that the person can, and may prefer, to do for themselves. Just letting them know that you're there if they need help is often enough.

Some helpful things you can do are:

- Be there. Don't shy away or avoid the person and their loss.
- Listen. Don't give advice unless asked.
- Let the person talk about their loss and the impact it is having upon them.
- Encourage story-telling and reminiscing.
- Involve the person whenever possible in social activities.
- Offer practical help without taking over.
- Be aware of your own needs and grieving.
- Take note of any changes in behaviour that are out of character.
- Encourage them to go for a check-up with their doctor.

Adapted from resources by: NSW Health Hunter Area Health Services