

## 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)

## Contact Us

### Head Office:

7 Welchman Street, Dubbo, NSW 2830  
(PO Box 379)

**Phone:** 02 6882 9222

**Fax:** 02 6884 9100

**Email:** [contact@nalag.org.au](mailto:contact@nalag.org.au)

**Web:** [www.nalag.org.au](http://www.nalag.org.au)

### Telephone Grief Support Line

**Call 02 9489 6644\*** (\*Call costs will apply)

### NALAG Centres & Branches (NSW)

**NALAG Centre for Loss & Grief DUBBO**  
(Same as Head Office)

**NALAG Centre for Loss & Grief MUDGEES**  
107 Mortimer Street Mudgee, NSW 2850

**Phone:** 0488 225 710

**Email:** [mudgee@nalag.org.au](mailto:mudgee@nalag.org.au)

**NALAG Bellingen/Nambucca Shires**  
**MIINDALA Branch**

**Mobile:** 0448 084 792

**Email:** [miindala2013@gmail.com](mailto:miindala2013@gmail.com)

**NALAG Sydney Grief Support Telephone Service**

**Phone:** 02 9489 6644

**Mobile:** 0439 922 201

**Email:** [griefsupport@live.com.au](mailto:griefsupport@live.com.au)

**NALAG NSW Inc**

**[www.nalag.org.au](http://www.nalag.org.au)**

**[contact@nalag.org.au](mailto:contact@nalag.org.au)**

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## Sudden and Unexpected Death

Grief reactions associated with  
sudden or unexpected death

# Grief Reactions Associated with Sudden or Unexpected Death

## What is meant by sudden and unexpected death?

Most people will have an idea about what a sudden, unexpected death is. But it is very important that this is thought about from the point of view of those affected. For example, even if someone has been terminally ill and receiving long term care, their death may still occur in a way that seems sudden and unexpected to their carers.

A sudden, unexpected death can raise some complex issues for the bereaved person. For many, because sudden, unexpected deaths are the sort of deaths more often linked with more traumatic ways of dying. A sudden death can catch people out and test what resources they have on hand for coping.

People may be:-

- Shocked.
- Confused initially.
- Have a need to go over and over the events around the death.
- Feel guilty or angry. If the death resulted from an accident it can mean mistakes were made.

- Shame and guilt arise for family that have lost a loved one to suicide.

## Self Care

Self care is important to prevent further stress to the body. The following have been found to be helpful in coping with grief:

- A regular daily routine. Have set times for getting up, meals and going to bed.
- A balanced diet. Include: breads and cereals; meat, fish and dairy products; fruit and vegetables.
- Avoid too much coffee and tea to help you sleep at night.
- Outdoor activities, such as going for a walk or gardening take you away from the stress, and refresh you mentally.
- Exercise, such as swimming, walking and team games, will produce chemicals called endorphins in the body which help to counteract depression and make you feel good. The exercise does not need to be strenuous. If you have doubts about your fitness consult your doctor.
- Relaxation: meditation, massage, music.
- A relaxing pre-sleep routine: winding down
- before bed and not watching television.
- Avoiding seeking relief through alcohol, smoking, medication and other drugs
- Consulting the doctor about physical

symptoms, for a blood pressure check, for practical help, for medical certificates, and for help with the grief.

## No time for Goodbyes

When a sudden or unexpected death occurs what is often most difficult for the bereaved is that there was no time for goodbyes. Grief can become complicated or unresolved until some way is found for people to say their goodbyes.

## How can I say goodbye?

Besides the funeral, there are other ways in which family of loved ones can say their goodbyes and remember their loved ones:

- Plant a tree and have a ceremony dedicating it to your loved one, a continuing and growing memory of your loved one. Chose a place to plant the tree that you can visit as regularly as you would like to reflect.
- Write a letter to your loved one, keep it in a safe place, bury it or burn it.
- Write a poem for your loved one.

Adapted from Grief Link resources website: [www.grieflink.asn.au](http://www.grieflink.asn.au)