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Useful Websites for Children & Adolescents

Below is a list of websites that may be useful for children and adolescents:

- **National Association for Loss & Grief (NSW) Inc**
  www.nalag.org.au/resources.htm

- **Doughy Centre - The National Centre for Grieving Children & Families**
  www.doughy.org

- **Winstons Wish - The Charity for Bereaved Children**
  Provides activities, interactive games and information
  www.winstonswish.org.uk

- **CanTeen - Youth Cancer Services. Provide peer support, camps and activity days**
  www.canteen.com.au

- **Now What - Online resource, counselling and books for adolescents**
  www.nowwhat.org.au
Further Information

Local public libraries have a range of books on grief and bereavement for different age groups. Check the library catalogue or ask a librarian.

Useful Websites

Please find below a list of the best places to visit to learn about living with grief.

- **National Association for Loss & Grief (NSW) Inc**
  www.nalag.org.au

- **Australian Centre for Grief & Bereavement**
  www.grief.org.au

- **Grief Link**
  www.grieflink.asn.au

- **Skylight**
  www.skylight.org.nz

- **Medline Plus**
  www.nlm.nih.gov/medlinepuls/bereavement.html

- **Caresearch** - online resource with evidence based information. It has recently been updated with bereavement, grief and children information
  www.caresearch.com.au
Introduction

Grief & Bereavement

This booklet has been prepared to help families and friends who are grieving following the death of a friend or relative.

Social Workers know that after a relative’s or friend’s death, you have many questions.

The information in this book has been written to help answer some of those questions.

For information about the funeral process please refer to the booklet “What Will I Do Now?”

Non Government Organisations

Individual, couple and family counselling regarding loss and grief. Please phone for an appointment. Fees may apply.

Anglicare (TIS available) 1800 133 373
Catholic Care (TIS available) Illawarra: 4227 1122
               Nowra: 4421 8248
Relationship Australia 4221 2000
Unifam (TIS available/ face to face interpreter) 4229 9863

Support Groups

Telephone Support Group

How the group works:

- 3 - 7 participants and two trained facilitators per group.
- Meet over the phone once a fortnight, each session runs for an hour.
- Participation is flexible - it is OK to skip sessions when you need to.
- For people in NSW it is a free and confidential service.

To join a group or find out more call Cancer Council Helpline

Cancer Council NSW
Telephone Support Groups
Phone: 13 11 20
Email: tsg@nswcc.org.au
Website: www.cancercouncil.com.au
Telephone Support Group Team: 1300 755 632
Grief Counselling Options

Services which use Telephone Interpreter Service (TIS), face to face interpreters are indicated.

**Palliative Care Social Workers - TIS / face to face interpreter**
Help families and close friends who are grieving the loss of loved ones.
**Phone:** 4223 8264 (Illawarra) 4464 6983 (Shoalhaven)

**Accredited Mental Health Workers**
Provide grief counselling on referral from the person’s GP. This referral is called a ‘mental health plan’. Some counsellors bulk bill, others may charge an additional fee. See Yellow Pages for details under ‘Counselling’.

**24 Hour Telephone Support**
Lifeline (Illawarra or South Coast) 13 11 14
Kids Helpline 1800 551 800

**Transcultural Mental Health Centre**
Bilingual mental health professionals who can provide free grief counselling. This can be done over the phone or face to face. Anyone can make a referral.
Monday to Friday 8:30am - 5:00pm
**Phone:** 1800 648 911

Grief

Grief is a natural response to loss. Nobody can ever prepare you for how you will feel when someone close to you dies. Every person’s experience and reaction is unique and personal. It is important to remember that you won’t be able to compare your grief to anyone else’s. You may feel extremes in emotions or you may feel little at all. You will move through it at your own pace in your way.

Below are some questions that are frequently asked.

**Is there a right way and a wrong way of coping with grief?**
There is no right or wrong way to grieve, and it is important to respect that.

Everyone is different. Your personality, life experiences, religion or culture will influence the way in which you grieve.

People are often aware of what they need to do to feel better but feel inhibited or judged. This can mean they don’t act on how they feel. Allow yourself time to talk and express your feelings to those around you. Being in a supportive and accepting environment is generally helpful.

Many believe that the amount of support people receive can reduce some of the impact of grief.

**Will I go through the stages of grief?**
Grief is rarely straightforward. It is more like a roller coaster, two steps forward and one step back.

Initially, many people feel physically and emotionally shocked. You may feel a whole range of responses - despair, anger, loneliness, disbelief, numbness, tiredness or perhaps relief that the person has died.
It might seem that while other people’s lives seem to be “getting back to normal” (at the 4-6 week mark) you can never be normal again. Things can never be the same, however a new normal does materialise.

The pain decreases; waves of grief wash over you less often, with diminished intensity, and eventually they lose their pervasive gut-wrenching quality.

People are forever changed by loss and may learn to live without all the answers.

Over time, you will find that you can take part in life without that person. This can be months or years, everyone is different.

**How long will this go on?**
The journey through grief is an individual experience. To begin with, the grief may be overwhelming and you may feel out of control. With time you will find you are more able to choose when to relive memories and express emotions.

Many things can impact on the intensity of your grief including the circumstances of the death, the relationship you had with your friend or relative and other things happening in your life at the time.

**Am I going mad?**
It may certainly feel like it at times! Grief can affect people in a physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual way.

You may need to make changes to your life and learn new skills, at a time when you feel least able to do so.

Giving yourself permission to grieve is important in the healing process.
Do I have the right to inflict this on others? What can I expect of them and they of me?

Much of grieving is about expressing emotion - some of which may feel unfamiliar or unacceptable to yourself or others e.g. anger, guilt, remorse, relief.

Some people feel uncomfortable with these emotions and the pain you may be feeling. They may feel helpless. You may feel they are avoiding you, which can increase your feeling of isolation.

The amount of support available from your family and friends may be limited if they too are grieving.

Talk to your family and friends about your needs and wishes. It is hard for them to guess what would be useful and comforting for you.

What others can do to help

- Be present and attentive.
- Sometimes silence and listening are the most helpful.
- Listen in a non-judgemental and accepting way.
- Avoid the use of clichés such as ‘Think of all the good times’.
- Offer practical and emotional support e.g. by minding children or cooking a meal.
- Understand tears are a normal and healthy part of the grieving process.
- Acknowledge anniversaries and dates of significance for the bereaved person.

People may need support many months after the death. Be sensitive to the depth and intensity of their loss and pain. You may not need to ‘do’ anything other than be warm presence and a willing listener.
When counselling can help

Grief is a normal response to loss. Your family and friends will often provide enough loving support to help you work through your loss. However, sometimes it may be of benefit to seek professional help.

Counselling can help when:

- You are struggling with day to day life.
- You need a safe, supportive person with whom to discuss your experience and acknowledge your feelings.
- You are worried about ‘wearing out’ family and friends with your need to tell your story over and over again.
- You feel family and friends have an unrealistic expectation of the grieving process.
- You have to continue your role as a parent or carer, and need ‘time-out’ to experience your grief and seek support.

Helping children grieve

Children grieve too. Their questions need to be answered honestly and simply. These answers also depend on their age and their level of understanding.

Very young children do not understand the finality of death. It may help to explain it in terms of the person’s body no longer working or relating it to the death of a pet.

Comfort the child and avoid explanations that will confuse or frighten them. For instance, you may describe death as when someone goes to sleep forever which can lead to a child being fearful of going to sleep; or tell them the person has gone on a long trip and won’t be coming back, which can make them anxious if any other family members go away.

Let children see that you are sad. If children don’t see adults grieving they will be confused by their own feelings of sadness and loss. If you feel your own grief is making it difficult for you to give attention to your child, ask a relative or friend if they can give special attention to them. You can also get support from a trained counsellor such as a school counsellor.

Give them the chance to be involved in the ceremonies after death, such as the viewing, the funeral and the wake. However, if they do not want to attend the viewing or funeral, do not insist.

Respect their wishes, there are other ways they can say goodbye such as writing letters that can be placed in the coffin or visiting the cemetery after the funeral.

If the child does attend the funeral it might be important for them to take part in some way. They can carry candles or place letters, flowers or personal items on the coffin. Being involved and getting the chance to say goodbye with other family members, will make your child feel included.

Your social worker can provide further information and ideas on talking to children about death, dying and grief. There are books on death and grief which are suitable for children. Some are available at all public libraries.