

Managing grief

The feelings you experience are normal, natural and healthy and part of the healing process. You cannot avoid grieving by keeping yourself busy at home or at work, or going on holiday. These activities are useful distractions providing a measure of relief allowing you to regain strength and energy, but sooner or later you will have to attend to your grief.

Taking pills or other drugs or alcohol will not take away the pain of grief. They may dull the pain for a period but not the reality of your loss. At some stage you need to attend to your grief by experiencing it and dealing with it.

Keep to your normal routine for as long as possible. Don't overcrowd your life, for you need time to grieve. Remember to look after yourself, it takes a lot of energy to grieve.

Family and friends become even more important at a time of a bereavement. Try to share your grief with them and let them share theirs with you.

Your recovery will not be a straight line and there will be good days and bad days. Bereavement is a time in which to remember rather than to forget. There will be occasions when something will jog your memory and cause you pain; but if you don't attempt to avoid such things, you will gradually feel stronger and more able to face the world again.

Things that were hard to take earlier will become more acceptable later. You will begin to take more interest in yourself and in what is going on around you. In the early days it is hard to believe that any meaning will return to your life. Allow yourself to believe that it will.

Finding Help

Be patient with yourself. Your whole system has taken a hard blow and it needs time to recover. There is no need to feel ashamed if you ask for help.

You may want to talk to others who have experienced similar loss. Although no two losses are ever the same, because each of us grieves what we have uniquely lost, this contact can be comforting and supportive.

Care, guidance, support and understanding, are an integral part of Trans-Help Foundation who can assist during your time of sorrow and when in need..

Trans-Help Foundation is a nonprofit community based organisation dedicated to assisting transport families when in need, helping to reduce the incidence and impact of road trauma throughout the transport industry in Australia.

Please contact Trans-Help for more information.



Help Line
1300 78 79 96

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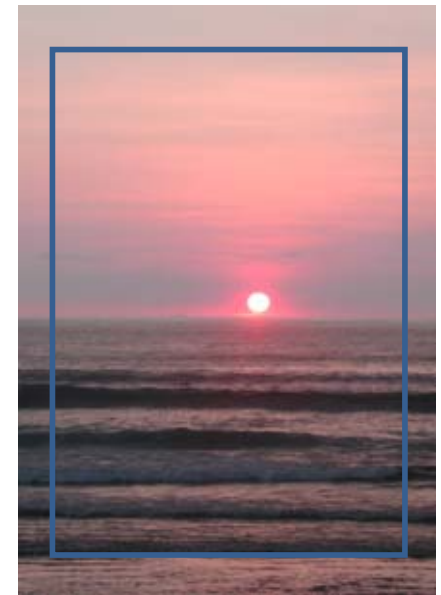
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www.transhelpfoundation.com.au



**Support for
Australian Truckers
& their families
when in need**

Coping with Grief



Understanding

1300 787 996

Initial Reactions

The death of someone you love is a shattering blow. It's hard to take in, even when expected.

The shock can be particularly severe when the death is sudden or of someone young. Everything seems unreal and you feel numbed. Shock is like an emotional and psychological anaesthetic and for a time it helps to isolate you from reality of the death until you are more able to cope with the death.

Many people experience a total feeling of numbness encompassing the emotional, physical and psychological states. The feeling of shock and numbness may last for a few hours, days, weeks or even months.

It is thought that this period of numbness is actually helpful for two reasons. Firstly, it acts as a buffer protecting you from the full impact of the death allowing time for you to gradually take in what has happened. Secondly, it allows time for you to gather together resources to help you cope with your grief.

As the experience of numbness begins to subside you may experience a multitude of emotions more intense than those experienced at other times of loss.

Bereavement is very upsetting and you may feel frightened and bewildered by unexpected thoughts and strong feelings. Sometimes there is anger, maybe against God, the doctor, yourself or even the person who died.

You are hurt and afraid, and it is natural to feel angry at everything that has caused you so much pain. The reactions you are experiencing are normal, expected, healthy and part of the healing process.

Common Reactions

Grief is an individual and intensely personal experience. There are however some common reactions that most people experience in the first few days following a death.

These reactions may be experienced on several levels emotionally, physically, behaviorally, spiritually or cognitively and can include:

- Absent-mindedness, lack of concentration or mental confusion
- Feelings of anxiety or panic
- Changes with sleeping or eating patterns
- Lack of energy, muscle weakness
- Feelings of anger or even rage
- Overwhelming feelings of tiredness
- Feelings of guilt or blame
- Feelings of helplessness
- Intense feelings of sadness
- Headaches, nausea, chest pains
- Loss of meaning or purpose
- A sense of dread or fears of dying

Be prepared for changes in your feelings and responses as time goes by. You may feel restless and unsettled or you just can't be bothered: things now seem so trivial. It may feel as though things are getting worse rather than better. You're carrying a heavy weight and it's hard to take any interest in life, in others, or even yourself. Most bereaved people go through a period when they feel intensely sad.

When someone close to you dies, it is as if part of you has died as well. Everything is shaken up by your loss as facing the reality of your loss will take time. Remember, you have suffered a severe loss and you need to give yourself time to recover.

Dealing with others

At times you may have to deal with the well meaning, but misguided, intentions of others as they try to comfort you. Many find the subject of death difficult to deal with and think they will say or do the wrong thing.

If you are 'emotional' e.g. crying or angry they feel uncomfortable. Some think you are falling apart, cracking up, or not coping. Well meaning friends may say things like, "You need to think of the kids" "Every cloud has a silver lining" or "It's God's will". Friends and others feel uncomfortable in your presence so they try to ease their discomfort by saying 'dumb' things.

There will be occasions when you don't want others around and other times when you want them to be there. You may worry they will lose interest in you if you talk about yourself too much, which is often what you want to do. It will help if you simply say "I know I'm talking about myself but you are being a great comfort".

If someone offers to help, or calls, but you don't feel up to it, let them know you appreciate their kindness and that you would be grateful if they would keep in touch and call again. Maintain contact with your friends. Let people know that you want to keep in touch and will do this by email, letter or telephone.

Bereavement leaves you vulnerable, especially at times when you need love, warmth and personal attention. Accept the concern of interested others cautiously, try not to rush into new relationships, hold back until you see things more clearly.

Loneliness is one of the hardest things to bear in bereavement. Family and friends can help, but in the end loneliness is something you have to come to grips with.