

# Resources for support

## Suggested reading

***Coping with Grief*** Mal McKissock

***A Grief Observed*** C.S. Lewis

***Good Grief*** Westberg Granger E

Your local library will have other books on grief and bereavement.

## Suggested websites & support groups

**National Association for Loss & Grief**

P 02 6882 9222

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

**Australian Centre for Grief & Bereavement**

P 03 9265 2100 or Toll Free 1800 642 066

[www.grief.org.au](http://www.grief.org.au)

**Bereavement Care Centre**

P 1300 654 556

[www.bereavementcare.com.au](http://www.bereavementcare.com.au)

**National Centre for Childhood Grief**

P 1300 654 556

[www.childhoodgrief.org.au](http://www.childhoodgrief.org.au)

**Solace** (for widows & widowers)

P 02 9519 2820

[www.solace.org.au](http://www.solace.org.au)

**Compassionate Friends**

(for bereaved parents)

P 02 9290 2355

[www.thecompassionatefriends.org.au](http://www.thecompassionatefriends.org.au)

## Other grief related pamphlets

Grief: coping with anniversaries, religious celebrations and special occasions

Children & grief: information for parents

# Contact

If you are concerned about what is happening to you, or have any further questions in regard to this information, you can contact the following people during business hours:

## Bereavement counsellor/coordinator

**South West Sydney**

*Braeside Hospital (Prairiewood)*

*SWSLHD Area Palliative Care Service*

P 02 9616 8678 or 02 9616 8649

Southern Highlands Bereavement Care Service (*Bowral*)

(A sliding scale of fees applies)

P 02 4862 1701

[www.shbcs.org.au](http://www.shbcs.org.au)

**Northern Sydney**

*Greenwich Hospital*

P 02 9903 8333

## Local social worker or hospital chaplain

To find a social worker or hospital chaplain contact your local hospital or Community Palliative Care Service.

## Lifeline

13 11 14

A 24-hour community telephone service providing information and support by trained volunteers.

**These services are free of charge.**

## HammondCare main office

Level 2, 447 Kent Street

Sydney NSW 2000

P 02 8280 8444

F 02 9267 3103

 **HammondCare**  
An independent Christian charity

# Understanding grief

## Palliative Care Bereavement Service



 **Health**  
South Western Sydney  
Local Health District

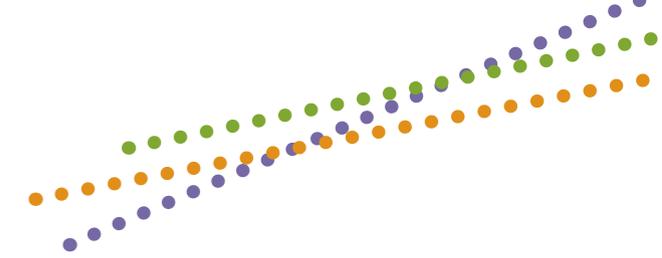
 **HammondCare**  
An independent Christian charity

# Grief, What is it?

Grief is a simple word used to describe the natural responses we have when facing a loss. The process of grief however is not a simple matter. When you are grieving, your reactions may be complex, threatening, often bewildering and, at times, misunderstood by others.

At the time of the death of your loved one, you might have felt shock, numbness and even disbelief. Some weeks later, when you think you should be getting over the death, you may feel things are even worse.

It is natural to feel this way. Over the coming months it may seem as if you are on a roller-coaster experiencing sudden times of grief and sadness when least expected.



## What can I expect?

The experiences of grief are many and varied and each family member may grieve differently. You can expect a number of reactions.

### Physical reactions

You may experience fatigue, loss or increase in appetite, sleeplessness, tightness in the chest or throat, palpitations, shortness of breath, gastrointestinal upset and sexual difficulties. It is important that you discuss any physical symptoms with your doctor.

### Emotional and psychological responses

Shock, sadness, anxiety, anger, guilt, despair, relief, confusion, loneliness, forgetfulness and poor concentration are common. You may feel you are going “crazy”. It is not unusual to dream about, smell or sense the presence of the person who has died.

### Spiritual responses

You may struggle with the meaning of your life and question your beliefs and values. Your spiritual beliefs may be a support for you or you may feel angry with God about what has happened.

## How long does it take?

Over the coming months you will most likely find that the pain will decrease and the feelings will be less intense. It is common for grief to take longer to resolve than most people think it should, and it can take more energy than you imagine. The time it takes will be different for everyone.

Days of special meaning such as birthdays, anniversaries and religious celebrations may be especially difficult (see pamphlet, *Grief: coping with anniversaries, religious celebrations and special occasions*).

## What can help?

When you are grieving it is important that you look after yourself. Try to eat a couple of small nutritious meals a day, even if you have little appetite.

Go out into the fresh air and take a walk each day and get as much rest as possible. Slow down and give yourself permission to let go of some of your responsibilities for a time.

Sometimes it can be helpful to treat yourself or do something that you enjoy or that keeps your mind engaged or busy, in order to get some respite from your grief. Not thinking of your loved one for some time or enjoying yourself does not mean that you do not miss him or her. It is not a betrayal. Give yourself permission to have joy when you can, just as you give yourself permission to mourn when you need to.

Avoid overuse of drugs or alcohol as they can delay or stop the healing process.

Wherever possible, put off making major decisions such as moving house or new relationships during the first 12 months following your loss.

## Ongoing support

Family and friends can be a great support but may be uncomfortable about how best to help you. Remember they may be grieving too. Encourage them to let you grieve in your own way and in your own time. Tell people what you might find helpful.

A relative or friend who can listen, without criticism or judgement, and without telling you how you should feel and what you should do, is possibly your most valuable source of comfort at this time.

There are others who can help as well. You may gain support from your doctor, clergy, a bereavement counsellor or through community organisations (see suggestions on back page).