



WHAT IS GRIEF?

Grief is a normal emotional response to the loss of someone or something important to us.

What does it feel like?

Intense sadness, shock, numbness, anger, loneliness, guilt, pain, relief, confusion, overwhelm – it can feel like a mixture of all of these feelings, sometimes independent of each other, sometimes more than one at the same time. It can feel very draining, to the point where simple tasks feel very difficult, like showering, brushing your teeth or leaving the house.

How long does it last?

How long is a piece of string? The intensity of the grief related feelings may come and go over time depending on what is happening around you. Eventually the intensity will ease and the space and time between episodes of intense feelings will grow longer.

When should I seek help?

It is important that you connect with a health professional; your GP, counsellor or psychologist, particularly after a significant loss so they can monitor you and help you manage how you are feeling and the intensity of the waves. It is particularly important to speak to your health professional if the grief you are experiencing is affecting your appetite, your sleep or you are having thoughts of harming yourself.

What types of loss do the Families of Veterans experience?

- Loss of life
- Loss of health (physical and mental health)
- Loss of physical presence (deployment)
- Loss of career
- Loss of financial stability
- Loss of community
- Loss of social support
- Loss of relationship

Navigating Grief and Loss

Please scan the code below to view a recent webinar we hosted on navigating grief and loss.



Who can help me?

You, your friends, your GP or health professional and specialist services like Open Arms, Lifeline, Grief line and Families of Veterans Guild. Importantly, ***you are not alone. You are never alone.***

What do children experience?

Strong feelings. Feelings that are as strong and intense as what adults feel but without the skills to regulate or soothe. Feelings that can be confusing



and can be expressed in challenging behaviours. The Kids Helpline has compiled some very good resources to help children through grief and they can be found at kidshelpline.com.au

SUPPORTING GRIEF

You can help yourself and others through grief and loss. Here are some ideas.

How can I help myself?

- Cry - Crying is a normal and natural way to express intense sadness – it is okay to let it out.
- Write – write down how you are feeling, how it feels in your body, what thoughts you are having, what you are worried about, what you miss and what you are grateful for.
- Stay connected – spend time with friends and family. Share stories, talk about how you are feeling, share a hug.
- Honour – what has been lost, what you are grieving through the sharing of memories and photos, lighting candles, writing letters or celebrating a legacy.

Importantly, don't pressure yourself. Instead, take it one day at a time. Try to schedule at least one self care action each day eg. Eat a healthy meal, meditate, exercise, read a book, enjoy a massage, listen to music.

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

- Open Arms: 1800 011 046
- Lifeline: 13 11 14
- Griefline: 1300 845 745
- Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800

**This document was prepared with resources available at healthdirect.gov.au/grief-loss*

How can I help others?

Get in touch. Don't wait for them to contact you and "let you know." Know that they might need you to simply be there.

Try not to fix them or the situation – you can't. Instead, simply practice active listening, really listen to them, their feelings and needs. Don't be scared to talk about the cause of the grief, particularly when someone has passed. Say their name rather than avoid talking about the person who has passed.

Offer practical help; help with lawn and garden care, meal preparation, childcare, school drop off and packed lunches, laundry, and tidying the home. Reach out and connect on key dates and anniversaries, knowing that grief can last a long time and the best thing you can do is let them know they are supported.

Where to find peers

You can find peers who have or who are experiencing similar thoughts and feelings. People who have been where you might find yourself or those you care about at any point throughout this journey. You can connect to them in person or online. Please give us a call on 02 9267 6577. You might also like to connect to our Wellbeing Program at wellbeing@fov.org.au.

