

Developed by:



Palliative Care  
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LEARNING  
THROUGH  
LOSS



Tasmanian  
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Delivered by:

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An Australian Government Initiative

# Navigating Through Grief and Loss

a resource  
for young  
people



# What is grief?

Grief is a natural response to loss and something that everyone will go through. Grief doesn't only occur when we lose someone we care about, we can grieve a relationship, home, pet, job, or imagined future. You can also grieve something or someone before the loss has happened. The bigger the loss the more intense the grief can be. Grieving is not a straight line and there is no set time frame for grieving.

*Grief, I've learned, is  
really just love. It's all  
the love you want to give,  
but cannot... GRIEF  
is JUST LOVE with  
no place to go.*

JAMIE ANDERSON

# What can I expect to feel?

Grief is as unique as a fingerprint. Everyone's grief looks different. Your feelings will come in waves, and often they might be unexpected or not make sense to you. You might be happy one second and sad the next. There will be times when you might feel sadness and joy at the same time. There is no wrong or right way to grieve. You are allowed to feel happy and smile – positive emotions are part of the grieving process too.



## GRIEF CAN FEEL LIKE:

**Anxiety**

**Regret**

**Panic**

**Confusion**

**Hopefulness**

**Relief**

**Joy**

**A feeling of  
numbness  
and being  
'hollow'**

**Deep  
sadness**

**Fear**

**Envy**

**Irritability**

**Anger**

**Guilt**



# YOU MIGHT ALSO FIND YOURSELF:

**Questioning  
what's important  
to you**

**Feeling  
worried  
about being  
treated  
differently**

**Having  
difficulty  
sleeping**

**Worried about  
the future and  
the people you  
care about**

**Experiencing  
headaches,  
tiredness, muscle  
aches and nausea**

*It's OKAY  
to not be  
OKAY*



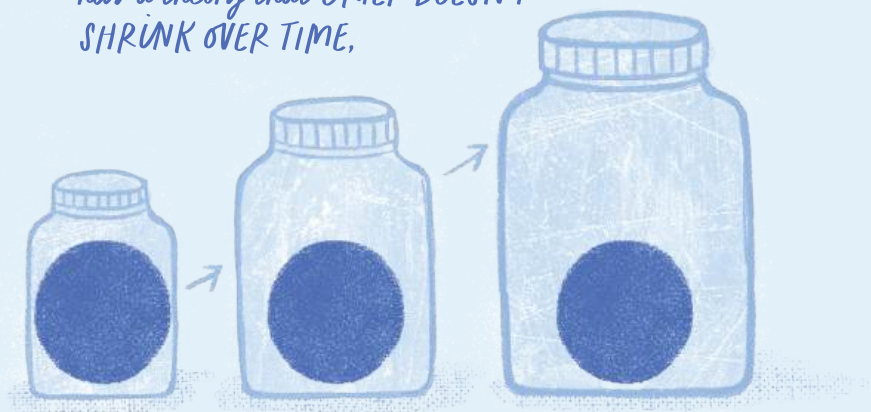
## Will I ever feel better?

You will feel better but your grief may never completely go away. When it comes to grief there is no set time frame for healing. There will be good days when you feel in control and more like yourself again, and there

will be hard days when you feel like you have gone backwards, and your grief is overwhelming. It's important to remember that this is the grief process – it is not linear, or straightforward. It is normal though, and healthy.



*DR. LOIS TONKIN, a grief counsellor,  
has a theory that GRIEF DOESN'T  
SHRINK OVER TIME,*



*instead, YOU GROW AROUND YOUR GRIEF.*

## Am I the only one who feels this way?

Everyone will at some point in their life experience grief. You may not know about it but at any given time there will be several young people at your school or in your area who are feeling just like you. We spoke to young people who had experienced loss and asked them what they wanted to say to other young people about grief.

This is what they said:

- *‘People grieve differently.’*
- *‘It never goes away, you just learn to make room for it.’*
- *‘It’s a healthy and normal reaction to an abnormal situation.’*
- *‘It’s not your fault if other people react to your grief and loss in ways you do not expect or appreciate.’*
- *‘Acknowledge that something happened but allow yourself to ease back into life.’*
- *‘Each person grieves differently, be kind to yourself.’*
- *‘Don’t mask the story, or mask your feelings as you are denying your reality.’*

## How do I make myself feel better?

There is no way to avoid grief when we lose someone or something that was important to us. However, by practising self-care and connecting with others, we can find our way through these big feelings. Self-care is a practice of honouring how we are feeling and giving ourselves what we need.

You can also take control of your healing journey by asking yourself, ‘Is what I’m doing right now helping or harming me?’ Every day you can make little choices that will support your healing.

## What kind of self-care should I do?

Your self-care practice can be as unique as you are. Self-care is any healthy and sustainable activity that you enjoy and which makes you feel a little better, or that creates space for you to feel. Self-care doesn’t need to be complicated, it can be really simple. Here are a few suggestions to get you started.



## Self-care basics:

### BREATHE

Focusing on your breathing can help you through big feelings, calm you down and generally make you feel better. There are some great apps that can support you through breathing exercises. One of the best apps is Smiling Mind, and it's free!

### REST

Grieving can be exhausting and it's likely you will feel very tired at times. When you are feeling tired, give yourself permission to rest. Resting can look like just sitting and watching TV, taking a 15-minute nap or going to bed earlier. Try not to compare yourself to a version of yourself when you weren't grieving as you have different needs and energy levels right now. If you feel as though you can't get out of bed and want to rest and sleep all the time, reach out to a trusted adult or contact one of the support lines at the end of this resource.

### EAT

Sometimes grief can change your relationship towards food and eating. Wanting to eat more or less is a normal response to grief. If your relationship to food changes, don't judge yourself – try to show yourself compassion. If you are struggling to eat, try making your favourite comfort food or eating smaller meals more frequently. If at any point you feel your relationship with eating becomes unhealthy or out of your control, reach out to the Butterfly Foundation for support using the contact details on the last page of this resource.





## MOVE

Movement is super important for your mental health, and it can be a great way to shift how you are feeling. You could move your body by playing sport or going for a swim. It could also be as simple as doing some slow stretching or going for a short walk. Move your body in whatever way feels right for you right now.

## CONNECT

Connecting to people who care about us and support us is a great way to practice self-care. You could reach out to a friend over text or ask them to join you in doing something you love. You could also join one of the online

communities listed at the back of this resource to connect with other young people with similar experiences. Additionally, you can access the in-person and over-the-phone services listed in the back of this book.

## BE KIND TO YOURSELF

You are going through one of the hardest things you will ever have to go through; whatever reaction you have, whatever you feel, it's okay and it makes sense. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. Show yourself compassion and let yourself do or feel whatever you need to without judging yourself. Try writing down a compliment or a kind message to yourself when you are able to.



## These are some things that helped other young people to navigate grief...

- *'Friends and support systems.'*
- *'School and routine.'*
- *'Being busy.'*
- *'Good facilities and systems of support such as having a psychologist.'*
- *'Connecting to people with similar experiences.'*
- *'Disconnecting from toxic environments.'*
- *'Voicing my story.'*
- *'By helping others I can make meaning of what I have been through.'*
- *'Planning something exciting to focus on and work towards.'*

*Grief is like the OCEAN: it comes on waves EBBING and FLOWING. Sometimes the water is CALM, and sometimes it is OVERWHELMING. All we can do is learn to swim*

VICKI HARRISON

## What do I say to my friends?

Your friends will want to be there for you but they might not know how. The best thing you can do is to communicate with them what it is that you need.

For example; sometimes you might want to talk about what you are feeling and other times you might just want to have fun and be distracted for a night. Let your friends know where you are at that moment so they can best support you.

Here are some things you can say if you feel stuck:

- *'I'm not feeling up to talking about it, can we just do something normal?'*
- *'I'm missing them today and I'd like to talk about some memories I have of them.'*
- *'I'm not feeling great, do you have time to talk about it?'*
- *'I don't feel like speaking right now, can we just sit in silence together?'*

## THINGS TO READ, LISTEN TO, OR WATCH:

### Videos

- Sudden Loss: A Free Meditation for Healing and Processing Emotions (14 mins) [www.youtube.com/watch?v=xks53KkW8ao](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xks53KkW8ao)
- Recovering After A Tragedy: A Free Meditation For Processing Grief and Tragedy (9 mins) [www.youtube.com/watch?v=eaB69aOGzMM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eaB69aOGzMM)
- A Meditation for Processing Tragedy (17 mins) [www.youtube.com/watch?v=9TXgKPSLxIY&t=35](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9TXgKPSLxIY&t=35)

### Books

Learning about grief and hearing the stories of those who have experienced a loss can provide a lot of insight and comfort. Here are a few great books that you can find at your local library or bookstore.

- *Good Mourning: honest conversations about grief and loss* by Sally Douglas and Imogen Carn
- *Resilient Grieving* by Dr Lucy Hone
- *Option B* by Sheryl Sanberg and Adam Grant

### Instagram accounts

- [@thatgoodgrief](https://www.instagram.com/thatgoodgrief)
- [@optionb](https://www.instagram.com/optionb)
- [@thegriefspace](https://www.instagram.com/thegriefspace)

## Websites and apps with more information on grief

- Grief and loss – additional grief and loss information [www.au.reachout.com/challenges-and-coping/grief-and-loss](http://www.au.reachout.com/challenges-and-coping/grief-and-loss)
- What's Your Grief – courses, creativity and community [www.whatsyourgrief.com/i-am-supporting-a-griever/](http://www.whatsyourgrief.com/i-am-supporting-a-griever/)
- My Grief – an app to support you in your grief [Download the My Grief App](#)

## COMMUNITY

Young people with lived experience of grief and loss told us that connecting with other young people who had experienced something similar helped them to process their grief and heal. If you don't know of anyone in your life who is in the same boat as you, you can find online communities full of young people who have had similar experiences.

### MY CIRCLE BY KIDS HELPLINE

My circle is an online platform where you can talk to other young people who are going through challenges just like you. It's free to join. Sign up at [www.kidshelpline.com.au/my-circle](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au/my-circle)

### CANTEEN CONNECT

Canteen Connect is a secure, online community available 24/7 where young people impacted by cancer can connect with others in a similar situation, check out events around the country or online and chat to a counsellor. It's free to join. Sign up at [www.canteenconnect.org](http://www.canteenconnect.org)

## RESOURCES & SERVICES FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER YOUTH

### 13YARN

Speak to an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander support person any time

13 92 76 | 24/7  
Free from any phone

## SUPPORT SERVICES

### BEYOND BLUE

Speak to a counsellor  
1300 22 4636

Webchat  
[www.beyondblue.org.au/support-service/chat](http://www.beyondblue.org.au/support-service/chat)

### HEADSPACE

Speak to a counsellor  
1800 650 890

Webchat  
[www.headspace.org.au/online-and-phone-support/](http://www.headspace.org.au/online-and-phone-support/)

### KIDS HELPLINE

Speak to a counsellor  
1800 551 800

Webchat  
[www.kidshelpline.com.au/get-help/webchat-counselling](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au/get-help/webchat-counselling)  
(there are 40-50 minute wait times for webchat)

## **LIFELINE – CRISIS SERVICE**

### **Phone support**

13 11 14 | 24/7

### **Web chat**

<https://bit.ly/3EvQul6>

## **THE BUTTERFLY FOUNDATION**

Support for eating disorders  
& body image issues

### **Speak to a counsellor**

1800 33 4673

### **Webchat**

[https://butterfly.org.au/  
get-support/chat-online/](https://butterfly.org.au/get-support/chat-online/)

## **QLIFE**

QLife provides free support to LGBTIQ+ people of all ages. They offer peer support and referral for people wanting to talk about a range of issues including sexuality, identity, gender, bodies, feelings, or relationships.

### **Phone**

1800 184 527

3pm – 12am (midnight)  
every day

### **Webchat**

<https://www qlife.org.au/>

## **SUPPORT AT SCHOOL**

Your school will have a counsellor, psychologist, social worker or nurse you can go to for emotional support. If you don't know who they are, ask a trusted teacher to help you find the support person/people in your school.

# JOURNALING SPACE

**Journaling is a great way to move through your grief and express yourself. Here are some prompts to get you started.**

*RIGHT NOW, I AM FEELING* .....

*TODAY I AM MISSING* .....

*THE TIME OF DAY I FIND THE HARDEST IS* .....

*I REMEMBER WHEN* .....

.....

.....

.....

.....

*MY FAVOURITE MEMORY IS* .....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**You could also try writing a letter to someone or yourself in the past or future. Here are some ideas to get you started.**

*IF YOU COULD WRITE A LETTER TO A PERSON THAT YOU'VE LOST, WHAT WOULD YOU WRITE?*

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*IMAGINE THAT YOU ARE WRITING A LETTER TO YOUR BEST FRIEND WHO HAS GONE THROUGH THE SAME THINGS YOU HAVE BEEN THROUGH, WHAT WOULD YOU WRITE?*

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*IF YOU COULD WRITE A LETTER TO A YOUNGER VERSION OF YOURSELF, WHAT WOULD YOU WRITE?*

### **Remember ...**

Journaling is not about writing perfectly. No one ever needs to read what you have written, and it doesn't even need to make sense. Just keep the pen moving over the paper and don't worry about spelling or grammar, it doesn't matter.

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal dashed blue lines.

Developed by:



Delivered by:



Learning Through Loss is developed by Palliative Care Tasmania and funded by the Tasmanian State Government. The program was co-designed in collaboration with key stakeholders in the youth, education and mental health sectors and young people with lived experience.

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



For support and resources, visit <https://bit.ly/42lv587> or use the QR code.





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