



# GRIEF AFTER SUICIDE – FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

## What to expect after a friend or loved one dies by suicide

When you lose someone, you care about you enter a stage in your life called bereavement. This is the time from which you lost that person. This time has no expiration date and within it you may experience grief, which is your body's emotional response to that loss and is a completely normal reaction. Everyone experiences it differently even if you have lost the same person. For, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, a part of this time can be called sorry business.

It can be a very difficult time when you lose someone you care about, and it can be extremely challenging dealing with different feelings and emotions. Some people find that they don't have much energy to keep up with day-to-day life such as school, activities and socialising which is why it is so important to take care of yourself and allow yourself to grieve. Sometimes, these feelings can be very intense, and they can hit you when you least expect them. You may experience some, all or none of these feelings and physical reactions:

- Behavioral responses such as crying, being more intolerant of others, having mood swings, feeling disjointed when you are talking to others, being resentful or angry, feeling restless and making erratic decisions.
- Social responses such as wanting to isolate or withdraw from friends and family, using more drugs or alcohol and being less concerned about your risk.
- You may have trouble concentrating in school or at work having changes in your cognitive responses such as confusion, sense of unreality, being forgetful and having a racing mind.
- You may feel shock and intense sadness but also expect feelings of numbness or anxiety, guilt, fear, helplessness, or other significant mood changes.
- You may experience physical responses such as a change in appetite or sleeping, tiredness, headaches, colds or feel nauseas.
- You may also question how you feel about the world, questioning why you, questioning faith, challenging beliefs, desolation, searching for understanding and having a loss of meaning.



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## The Grief Journey After Suicide – Strategies to help

It's important to understand the grieving process and what you may experience. There is no right or wrong way to grieve but sometimes we do need help. Here are some strategies that may help in the coming weeks or months.

- **Take it slow and be kind to yourself.** You might feel shocked, confused, and find it hard to believe that the person you care about has died so taking some time for yourself to understand your emotions and what has happened is really important.
- When someone dies it can be useful to **create or maintain some healthy habits.** You could start by drinking plenty of water, eating fruits and vegetables, and aiming to get between 7-10 hours' sleep. This can be hard to do, so just try taking it one step at a time. Here are a few helpful tips if you are having trouble sleeping: [Support Pack Information](#)
- **Tap into your support networks** such as friends and family. They might not fully understand what you are going through but even just sitting with them or doing daily activities together might help.
- Research shows that **keeping active** by walking or running, playing sports, or any physical activity can be a positive tool to use to help boost your mood and release endorphins. Endorphins are chemicals that your body produces to relieve stress and pain. However, if this is too difficult at the time, you could try listening to music, reading, drawing, painting, or doing anything you usually love doing.
- Try to **stay away from drugs and alcohol** to numb any pain you may be feeling or to help you sleep. It may feel like it is helping at the moment however it might only just delay your feelings and emotions which could add more pain to your grief.
- **Ask for help when you need it.** There is no shame in asking for help. We all need it, especially when someone has died. This could be a parent, a sibling, a friend, an elder, or anyone you trust. Or you could call any of the numbers that are listed below.
- **Talking about the person who died** can be helpful, sharing memories, keeping some of their items like a piece of clothing, jewelry, or any kind of possession that reminds you of them. You might like to light a candle or spend time in a place that reminds you of them.
- It is important to know that **grief is a very individual journey**, and no one grieves the same even when you are grieving the same person. Some people are more open and express their grief by crying and wanting to talk about that person and how they are feeling, others may be more private and prefer to keep busy. Everyone experiences pain differently and even if we don't understand it is important to respect each unique way



# SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE AFTER A SUICIDE WHERE TO GET HELP?

## Bereavement Support

### hope bereavement care

Offers free information, support, and counselling  
for those experiencing loss after suicide

Call 4215 3358

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

### headspace

headspace Geelong 03 5222 6690

headspace Ocean Grove 03 525301400

## Online and Tele Support

### LIFELINE

Lifeline provides all Australians experiencing a personal crisis with access to 24-hour crisis support and suicide prevention services.

Phone: 13 11 14

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

National Bereaved by Suicide Line Phone: 1300 467 354

Lifeline Text 6pm-12am 0477 13 11 14.

### EHEADSPACE

eheadspace provides online counselling and telephone support to young people

aged 12 to 25

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

1800 650 890

### SUICIDE CALLBACK SERVICE

The Suicide Call Back Service provides telephone, video and online counselling to people at risk of suicide, carers of someone who is suicidal and those bereaved by suicide across Australia.

Phone: 1300 659 467

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

### KIDS HELPLINE

Kids Helpline provides telephone and online counselling for Australian children and young people aged between 5 and 25 years.

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

1800 650 890

## Mental Health and Crisis Support

If you are feeling unsafe, isolated, or out of control, talk to a trusted adult, elder or a GP.

You can call the Geelong Mental Health Triage Service 24/7 on 1300 094 187.

In an emergency call 000.

Thanks to our partners



Anthony Costa  
Foundation



Jesuit  
Social Services  
Building a Just Society



Freemasons

This fact sheet has been adapted from these online resources: -  
Standby: [3.-Grief-after-Suicide-Possible-Experiences-support-pack.pdf \(standbysupport.com.au\)](#)  
Support After Suicide (JSS):  
<https://www.supportaftersuicide.org.au/young-people-and-grief/>  
headspace: [Dealing With Grief And Loss & The Effects on Mental Health | headspace](#)

Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement Information Sheets:  
[Grief Information Sheets](#)