

How to Help a Friend in Grief

BE AWARE:

Remember that working through grief is a normal and necessary process.

BE THERE:

Learn to be with the person, not to solve the problem.

BE SENSITIVE:

Allow the pain. Learn to enter it, not to try to take it away.

BE HUMAN:

Allow expression of feelings (guilt, anger, sorrow, depression) without judgement.

BE READY:

To listen when the story is told over and over again.

BE PATIENT:

Remember that the process of mourning takes time.

Further Reading

The two books referred to in this brochure are:

1. **BEREAVEMENT, STUDIES IN ADULT GRIEF**
Colin Murray Parkes
(Pelican)
2. **GOOD GRIEF**
Granger Westberg
(Joint Board of Christian Education)

Other recommended reading includes:

- **COPING WITH GRIEF**
Mal McKissock
(Australian Broadcasting Corporation)
- **DON'T WAIT TILL I DIE TO SEND ME FLOWERS**
Evie Hodge
- **WRITE THROUGH**
Evie Hodge

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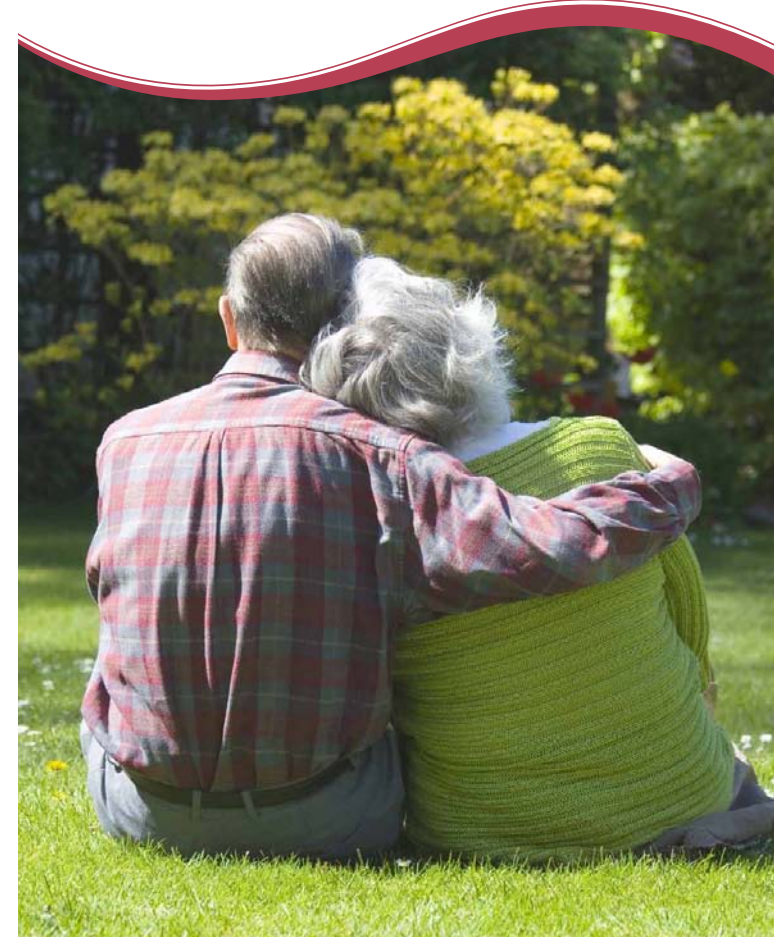
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The Process of Grief **THE PROCESS of GRIEF**

This brochure aims to assist with an introductory understanding of the grief process, and gives some suggestions about supporting the bereaved.

Often it is not made easy for us to grieve in our society. However, we can grow and mature as human beings if we are allowed to grieve successfully. Grief is a process, not a state. It takes time to work through. Grief is a natural response to a significant loss.

Grief will be dependent on a number of factors, including:

- Degree of attachment to the person or thing lost.
- The quality and length of relationship.
- The length and nature of illness.
- The nature of death.

Colin Murray Parkes, in his book Bereavement, suggests four phases in the grief process:

NUMBNESS. Emotions are frozen.

PINING. Desire to bring back the lost.

DEPRESSION. Preoccupation with the loss.

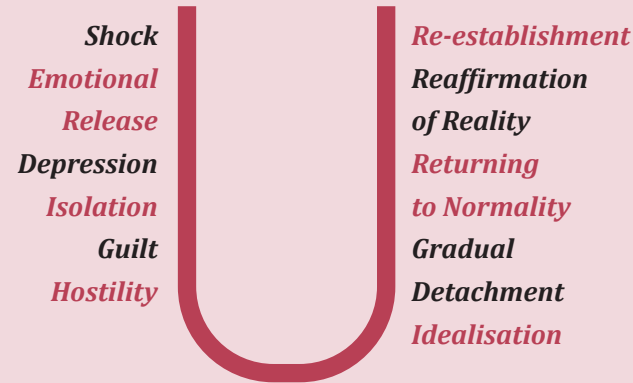
RECOVERY. Development of a renewed identity.

Granger Westberg, in Good Grief, expands these phases in this descriptive way:

- We are in a state of shock.
- We express emotion.
- We feel depressed and very lonely.
- We may experience physical symptoms of distress.
- We may become panicky.
- We feel a sense of guilt about the loss.
- We are filled with hostility and resentment.
- We are unable to return to usual activities.
- Gradually hope comes through.
- We struggle to readjust to reality.

In talking about phases or stages of grief, it is important to acknowledge the individuality of each grieving person, and to be careful not to impose some pattern of grieving onto each person.

The patterns or stages of normally “worked through” grief are often illustrated by a so-called **grief trough**. It is important to understand that this model can be misleading as many people struggle and go forward and regress many times as they work through the process.



Some of the most important needs of the bereaved can be summarised as follows:

TO FEEL SUPPORT

We need to recognise that bereavement raises all sorts of feelings, and that people need the care, love, support and understanding of others.

TO FACE REALITY

The process of recovery is linked directly to acceptance of the loss. Acceptance will not come until reality is faced.

TO EXPRESS FEELINGS

It seems important to many grieving people that emotional release be encouraged. Grieving people should be helped, encouraged and allowed to express their feelings. This may mean tears, talking and acting out.

TO MOVE TOWARDS THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF SELF

Life is an on-going process. For many this is difficult, and for a period of time, often many months, painful and unthinkable. Yet life is for living and loving, for caring and relating.

SOME DO'S & DON'TS IN THE WAY WE CARE FOR GRIEVING PEOPLE:

DO:

- Listen and hear what is being said.
- Acknowledge that each person's style of grieving will be unique.
- Remember that nobody has to justify their feelings to you.
- Realise the bereaved has suffered a loss, even if you don't perceive it as such.
- Allow the bereaved time to grieve and to have real memories of the relationship with the deceased.
- Encourage the bereaved to express emotion and to work through the grief.
- Allow children to share in the grief process with adults.
- Remember that many who give support immediately after a death do not always continue to give that support.
- Recognise the intensity of grief that will be experienced at certain significant times.
- Encourage those who have a common grief to support one another if they can.

DON'T:

- Prevent the bereaved from expressing their grief or anger if they need to.
- Be turned off by repetitive knockbacks to your efforts to assist.
- Stifle the bereaved person's desire to talk about the deceased.
- Give trite answers to the “Why?” question.