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# Coping with Adolescent Grief

**Be a good listener**

Grieving people need to talk about their loss, acknowledge that they have been through a difficult experience. You can't fix their grief but you can be there, hear their story, and share their journey.

**Be a shoulder to cry on**

Allow them to cry with you, crying helps the release of emotions and this helps with healing.

**Be in touch with them**

Drop in, call on the telephone and say "I was thinking of you today" write a letter, send an email, remember special days like Christmas, birthdays and anniversaries.

When someone has experienced a loss, there will be big and small adjustments to be made in their lives. These could bring uncertainty, frustration, fear, sadness and change as each new day comes along. Grief is about adapting to change in life, thoughts, hopes, beliefs and the future.

**Be a friend**

Often being there is all that is needed to support someone who is grieving.

(Adapted from the writings of Doris Zagdanski)





## When our world changes...

**Grief Feelings:** These will come and go, and you may feel only some of them.

**Shock / Disbelief:** "I wake up in the morning and pretend it's just been a bad dream". You feel in a daze, numb, empty. It can take a while for what has happened to sink in. Sometimes what has happened is so bad you don't want to believe it's true.

**Sadness:** You want to cry. It helps to let these feelings out when you feel them, rather than pushing them down. Afterwards you usually feel better and have a sense of relief

**Anger / Blaming:** You may feel angry. You may want to blame a particular person for the loss, or you may blame yourself and feel guilty.

**Yearning:** "It's hard for me to stop thinking about it, even when I'm trying hard to concentrate on what the teacher is saying." There is a gap in your life where that person or possession once was. You understand that you can't have things the way they were, but you think, talk and may dream a lot about it.

## Why Do I feel like this?

**Out of control:** "Why do I keep on crying all the time?" You may feel anxious because you suddenly have heaps less control over you feelings - tears want to spill out at any time. This will pass over time.

**Physical changes:** Your body can feel grief too. You may feel generally unwell and have headaches, stomach aches, or get colds easily for a while. You have a change in appetite or feel tired a lot.

**Depression:** If you have lost someone or something that was very important to you, you may feel grief for a long time. Sometimes grief can lead to an illness call depression. Depression is when you feel hopeless, angry or miserable all the time. You may think a lot about death and suicide, find it hard to concentrate or make decisions and feel that you don't enjoy anything any more.

This is not a normal part of grief if it goes on for two weeks or longer. If you're feeling this way it's important to tell someone you trust so that you can get some help.

## There is no 'right' way to grieve

- Talk to someone you trust about how you're feeling; a friend, family member, school counselor, minister, phone line service like Lifeline, Kids Help Line.
- "I couldn't see the point because talking wouldn't change things back, but after talking to my best friend it felt good to let it out".
- Write out or draw how you feel. You might need to do this several times, as your feelings change.
- Look through photos of the person or thing you have lost if you have any. This can make you feel your loss very intensely for a while. It can help you draw your feelings to the surface, so make sure you're in a place where you feel comfortable about showing your emotions before you do it.
- Be gentle on yourself. Give yourself time.
- Take it easy.

## What Helps?

Write a letter saying good-bye to the person or thing you have lost. You can put in it whatever you want as it's just for yourself. E.g. You can write about the person, what you like, what used to drive you mad that they did, what you did together.

Escape from your grief for a while by listening to your favourite music, going to the movies, surf the net, playing sport or reading. Anything that gives you a rest and space.

All of the above things help you let out your grief. Choose whatever suits you.

## Helping a friend who is grieving

All you have to do is be around. Let your friend know that you understand they are going through a hard time and that you will be there if they want to talk or go out. Talk to them about what you've read in this pamphlet, about what helps a person deal with their grief.

These people can help

Greater Western Area Health Service 02 6841 2200

NALAG 6882 9222

Lifeline 13 11 14

Kids Help Line 1800 551 800

Other people can help

- Your Doctor
- School counselor
- Your teacher

Adapted from resources by: NSW Health

