

**Supporting NSW communities,
families and individuals
experiencing loss and grief.**

www.nalag.org.au



NALAG
National Association for
Loss and Grief (NSW) Inc

Helping someone who is grieving

When someone has experienced a loss, there will be big and small adjustments needed 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 good listener

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

Be a shoulder to cry on

Allow the person to cry with you. Crying helps the release of emotions and improves the healing process.

Be in touch with them

Visit the person or call them. Let them know you've been thinking of them. Write a letter, send an email, remember their special days like birthdays and anniversaries.

Be a friend

Often just being there is all that is needed to support someone who is grieving. Everyone's journey through grief is different and can last a long or short time. Don't be afraid to speak up if you think your friends needs help.

(Adapted from the writings of Doris Zagdanski)

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Placing a loved one in residential aged care

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Placing a loved one in residential aged care

The decision to place a loved one into residential aged care can be extremely difficult. There may be feelings of guilt that you have let your loved one down. Spouses may find it challenging to place a partner in care considering their vow of “until death do us part.”

Children of aged parents may also feel guilty having previously promised their parent that they would “never put them in a home”. Other beliefs are “I am the caretaker and I need to look after them.”

Certainly, when a person is put into residential aged care there is a huge adjustment they may go through as well. They move into a place that is not their own and may have to share facilities with others when they are not used to doing so. In the case where there is a couple, and one moves into care while the other remains at home, there is a sense of separation.

There are times when a carer is not able to provide for all the needs for a loved one. A person may become so unwell that they require the support from people who have specialised training in aged care.

Tips

Here are a few tips for dealing with guilt over placing a loved one in residential aged care

- Consistently remind yourself your loved one is safer, less isolated and well cared for
- Give yourself permission to grieve
- Seek reconciliation with your parent for unresolved conflicts or old resentments

- Acknowledge that the fact residential aged care is a necessary reality for millions of people worldwide including your loved one
- Make each visit to your loved one in the aged care facility meaningful. You will be able to spend quality time with them as opposed to providing caring duties
- Recognise that you can still be a care giver – just in a different way
- Seek support from friends and close family members
- Remind yourself that you were not responsible for your loved ones physical or cognitive impairments. A residential aged care facility will have the necessary trained staff and equipment to better support your loved one
- Learn to understand that you can't live life for others. There is only so much you can do. Total control of events isn't in your hands. There might not be a solution that makes everyone happy or solves every problem. Do your best to handle what is within your abilities, and then let the rest go.

Transition tips

- Understand the costs. When planning aged care options it is important to know what costs will be met by government and what out of pocket expenses there may be
- Become familiar with the facility beforehand – visit the facility and meet other residents
- Communicate with staff at the aged care facility – This can help prepare for what is likely to happen. Discuss any hesitations, fears or concerns as well as other strategies that have

- been successful for other residents
- Have an open and respectful conversation with all family members about the transition. It is important to acknowledge the challenges of a loved one leaving their home but there are also advantages of moving into aged care (company of others and increased safety)
- Keep lifestyle and surroundings as familiar as possible – there are limits to what a person entering aged care can bring with them. Photos, music or prized possessions can help someone feel like the facility is more homely.

Responding to the change

Moving into residential aged care is a huge adjustment. Understanding common responses to change can assist in minimising stress and confusion

- **Anxiety of the unknown** – we all like to know what will happen and it provides a sense of security. Having a positive attitude towards change with the support from friends and family can assist in minimising anxiety
- **Questioning** – people involved in the transition may question if they have made the “right choice”. This type of thinking with typically decrease with time. If it doesn't there may be need to seek extra support through counselling
- **Time** – for most people the first few weeks of moving into residential aged care are typically the most challenging. Adjusting to change takes time and it can be from 6 to 12 months or longer before there is full adjustment.

For more information on NALAG services, visit www.nalag.org.au