

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

[www.nalag.org.au](http://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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# Psychological First Aid

Helping Survivors in the  
Immediate Aftermath  
of Disaster, Trauma  
or Crisis Event

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## Psychological First Aid

This brochure describes an evidenced-informed approach for helping survivors cope in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, trauma or crisis event known as *Psychological First Aid*, and explains how first responders apply the skills to limit distress. *Psychological First Aid* aims to lessen the painful range of emotions and physical responses experienced by people exposed to disaster, trauma and crisis events. These reactions include combinations of confusion, fear, hopelessness, helplessness, physical pain, anxiety, anger, shame, shaken religious faith, and loss of confidence in self or others.

*Psychological First Aid* can help alleviate these painful emotions and reduce further harm that can result from initial reactions to disasters, trauma or crisis events

### **Do's and Don'ts for Promoting an Environment of Safety, Calm, Connectedness, Self-Efficacy and Hope**

The primary objective of *Psychological First Aid* is to create and sustain an environment of 1) safety; 2) calm, 3) connectedness to others, 4) self-efficacy or empowerment, and 5) hope.

#### **Do:**

##### **Promote Safety**

- Help people meet basic needs for food & shelter, and obtain emergency medical attention.
- Provide repeated, simple and accurate information on how to obtain these.

##### **Promote Calm**

- Listen to people who wish to share their stories and emotions and remember there is no wrong or right way to feel.
- Be friendly and compassionate even if people are being difficult.
- Offer accurate information about the disaster or trauma, and the relief efforts underway to help survivors understand the situation.

##### **Promote Connectedness**

- Help people contact friends or loved ones.
- Keep families together. Keep children with parents or other close relatives whenever possible.

##### **Promote Self-Efficacy**

- Give practical suggestions that steer people towards helping themselves.
- Engage people in meeting their own needs.
- Find out the types and locations of government and non-government services and direct people to those services that are available.
- Remind people (if you know) that more help and services are on the way when they express fear or worry.

#### **Don't:**

- Force people to share their stories with you, especially very personal details (this may decrease calmness in people who are not ready to share their experiences).
- Give simple reassurances like "everything will be OK" or "at least you survived" (statements like these tend to diminish calmness).
- Tell people what you think they should be feeling, thinking or doing now or how they should have acted earlier (this decreases self-efficacy).
- Tell people why you think they have suffered by alluding to personal behaviours or beliefs of victims (this also decreases self-efficacy).
- Make promises that may not be kept (un-kept promises decrease hope).
- Criticise existing services or relief activities in front of people in need of these services (this undermines an environment of hope and calm).