



TOBIN BROTHERS FUNERALS

Celebrating Lives SINCE 1934



Supporting yourself and others in Grief...
Practical support, guidance and referrals

COPING WITH GRIEF

At Tobin Brothers Funerals, we understand that grief carries with it a myriad of emotions, some of which can be confusing, troublesome, and hard to manage. As such, we've taken care to provide an assortment of resources designed to help you cope during this trying time and into your future.

From taking a look at the process of bereavement itself, and how you can use the pain of grief to honour, reflect on, love and honour what was, to how to help children cope with grief, we offer some helpful tips and insight into death, the grieving process, and the variety of support services that are available to you as you navigate your loss.

We recognise that losing a loved one can be a life-changing experience, and we invite you to contact us following the funeral, if you feel we can help in any way.

For 24 hour service and enquiries, contact us at info@tobinbrothers.com.au or phone : 13 19 34

What is grief and how do I understand it?

Grief is the very natural response to a significant loss in our life. Grief takes time, and the length of time is different for everyone as they move through the process.

Perhaps when we are grieving we find ourselves behaving in ways which surprise us and/or others. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' way to grieve. There are many reasons which influence our responses. Our information that outlines some Factors Influencing Grief Responses may assist in understanding your own feelings and/or those of family members and friends.

Sometimes, in life, we experience losses which are not recognised publicly and therefore we do not receive the support we need. The information listed on our web page Grief Can Come in Many Forms and at Many Times acknowledges this fact, and offers insights into what an individual may be dealing with privately.

What can I say to help someone who is grieving?

A very commonly asked question. We offer Some Helpful Suggestions below and we hope this will assist you to give the quality of help you wish to offer.

Surviving Suicide

The loss which most often causes intense emotional pain and many other different responses, is death. There is no easy way to lose someone you love and often the cause of the death brings with it its own complexities, an example of this is when death occurs through suicide. Our guide 'Surviving Suicide' gently outlines some helpful ways to cope with this devastating event.

Children in Grief

Another significant factor which influences our responses is our age at the time of the loss. Children develop over a period of years in their ability to grasp concepts such as time and the permanency of death. Our brochure 'Supporting Children in Grief' offers a concise overview of this development of understanding which will assist parents, teachers, caregivers and others who support grieving children, we also offer more information on our website.

THE PROCESS OF GRIEF

"The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, sensitivity and an understanding, which fills them with compassion, gentleness and a deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen."

- Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

Bereavement is the experience of loss after a death. Grief is the natural healing process after any loss. Our brains physically change when we are in grief and due to these changes we can be forgetful, disorientated, confused, impulsive and emotional. If we could see how we feel, we may have a limb missing or perhaps gaping wounds in the chest or stomach. That is why we need time to heal and transform and grief gives us that time.

Grief is an individual experience and it is up to us to acknowledge how big our wound is and what we need to heal and transform. Just like a wound there are phases to healing and ups and downs. The grief process will vary for each person due to:

- Personal meaning and worth attached to that which is lost.
- Age.
- Previous grief and life experiences.
- Trauma associated with the loss.
- Culture.
- Associated guilt.
- Associated anger and resentments.
- Expected or sudden loss.

There is no right or wrong way to grieve, there is only what works and doesn't work for the individual. What works is anything that supports our healing and does not cause harm to us or others.

We can use the pain of grief to:

1. Understand, reflect on, love and honour what was.
2. Let go of what no longer serves us.
3. Accept what is.
4. Make decisions about what is important and how life will be from now on.
5. Grow into a new way of being and find a life with new meaning.
6. Remain connected to our loved one.

Grief is a normal part of life. We are all different; some people need a lot of time alone while others like to keep busy doing things. The outward behaviour of a person does not tell us if they are grieving or not, it is what they are processing on the inside.

As we respond to grief, it is normal to alternate between times of focusing on what is lost and then on what we have. This focus can change all the time as new waves of emotion drive us to reach out and keep going, or to stop and withdraw.

Overwhelming feelings of pain, chaos and exhaustion are normal. These feelings can return suddenly, even years later, because grief integrates and becomes part of who we are. It is not something to get over or stop, but something to feel, connect with, learn and grow from. The pattern of grief can vary for each person but the graphs below may help to visualise how it can be:



The length of each wave will vary for each individual and is completely unpredictable. Just one day can be full of tears, despair, love and laughter



Dr Lois Tonkin's theory of 'Growing around Grief' says that grief itself does not get smaller, but our lives and experiences grow, so that the space taken up by grief seems lessened.

FACTORS INFLUENCING GRIEF RESPONSES

In each situation in which an individual (or group) experiences a death, funeral, or loss, the responses may differ greatly from previous responses to similar losses.

No two losses are the same. No two relationships are the same. No two points in time are the same. Many factors vary, and so our grief responses vary also.

When thinking of how a person is grieving (or how we are ourselves, grieving) consider the following factors that are in place NOW that may not have been in place in the past at a time of significant loss.

- Current health situation
- Relationship with person who has died/thing which has been lost
- Age of person grieving
- Previous experience of grief
- Cultural background
- Belief system
- Financial situation
- Knowledge around cause of loss/death
- Personality
- Concurrent losses/changes occurring
- Support systems – family/friends/community
- Cause of death (i.e. expected or not expected)
- Expectation of death
- Recognition of loss by others (i.e. disenfranchised grief)
- Social ‘acceptability’ of cause of death
- Social ‘acceptability’ of relationship of bereaved to deceased
- Ability to communicate feelings
- Language levels

There are many other factors also. It can assist us, when supporting others, to recognise the cumulative effect of changes and transitions in a person’s life journey.

A major loss rarely occurs in isolation, and to be capable of assessing the overall impact of grief on an individual is one of the first steps to appropriate support.

GRIEF CAN COME IN MANY FORMS

Normal Grief

Firstly, grief in and of itself is normal. Any time you suffer a loss, it’s the most normal thing in the world to have feelings of grief. There is a huge range of emotions that you may experience during your grieving process. Some of these can be physical, while others may be behavioral, emotional, or social.

Examples of physical reactions to grief:

- An actual tightness in your chest
- Feeling weak
- Lack of energy
- Nausea
- Heart palpitations
- Restlessness
- Tearfulness

Examples of behavioral reactions to grief:

- Forgetfulness
- Confusion
- Dreaming of the person you've lost
- Absent-mindedness

Examples of emotional reactions to grief:

- Anger
- Shock
- Denial
- Numbness
- Loneliness
- Relief
- Apathy
- Irritability
- Misplaced anger

Examples of social reactions to grief:

- Being unusually dependent on other people
- Withdrawing from friends
- Relationship difficulties
- Avoiding family
- Avoiding colleagues
- Avoiding friends
- Increased substance abuse
- Neglecting yourself but caring for others

Anticipatory Grief

This grief is the response to the knowledge that a change or transition will almost inevitably occur which will bring losses with it.

Some examples may be: diagnosis of an illness or disability; knowledge or fear that a job is to be lost; recognition that a relationship is breaking down and may end in separation and or divorce; moving house; moving school; children will be leaving home; news of war; marriage of children.

Often the changes that are anticipated are not known to others and therefore the normal grief responses are misunderstood by those witnessing them.

Anticipatory grief or anticipatory mourning can be common if you're expecting the loss of someone close to you in the near future. To prepare for the impending loss, you might begin trying to envision life without them. It can be especially common in cases when someone you care for is facing a terminal illness.

During anticipatory grief, you might try to anticipate how you'll be reacting and mourning once your friend or loved ones passes away. You might feel loss or even incredible fear or emotion for the dying person.

There are some positive sides to anticipatory grief, though. Many people feel like they were able to take the time they needed to say goodbye or to have tough conversations about forgiveness. Even just having the time and space to say "I love you" can be healthy. All of this can help in preparing for when you do begin the grieving process after you experienced a physical loss.

Complicated Grief

This grief is not able to be expressed at the time a loss occurs. It is repressed grief. Usually external events and responsibilities disallow the opportunity for the expression of grief. It is put 'on hold'.

Some examples may be: the grief felt at the death/funeral of a spouse or a divorce when family responsibilities must be attended to, children cared for, and the like; the grief felt at leaving a homeland as experienced by migrants, refugees and asylum seekers when survival in a new land prohibits expression of loss; the grief felt when a baby is stillborn or miscarried and the parent's grief is minimised by those around them.

Complicated grief occurs when your grieving process does not move all the way through the steps of grief. It can be prolonged and much more intense, and it'll typically have a significant impact on your ability to function. You might feel more depressed and have increased anxiety. With complicated grief, your reactions and behavior will likely extend for very long time periods, with little to no improvement.

Complicated grief typically requires help from a mental health professional. Someone experienced with complicated grief can be beneficial, as complicated grief is one of the more difficult types of grief. It's very important to understand that complicated grief will not resolve on its own.

Disenfranchised Grief

This grief is felt when the loss is not recognised by others and/or is not acknowledged through any public ritual or ceremony. For example, there can be a strong stigma attached to death that results from an overdose or suicide and your feelings of grief may be discounted, or perhaps family felt strongly about not having a funeral service or memorial so the sense of recognition and even closure is missing.

Some other examples of this may be: when a secret love affair ends; when a baby is relinquished for adoption; when sexual abuse, rape or domestic violence is experienced; when a dream is unrealised; when infertility or miscarriage is experienced; when teenagers experience the break up of a relationship, and the like.

Any time a loss isn't recognised, or you don't feel seen or heard in how you're feeling and grieving, the result may be disenfranchised grief.

Ambivalent Grief

This is grief that has positive feelings mixed with painful ones about the loss.

Examples are: a parent of a disabled child who loves them but also grieves for the loss of the dream of the fully abled child. Grieving for a missing person who may return but is not there or someone whose death ends suffering and pain so there is relief as well as grief for the loss of who they were.

Remember:

There is no right or wrong way to grieve.

There are many nuances to grief and there are many other types that are not listed here. If you feel that you're experiencing something you need help with, it's important to recognise that these feelings are normal and valid. You can seek help for your grief through therapy, by joining a grief support group, or by looking online for other resources. We have listed some support services at the end of this guide.

SUPPORTING YOURSELF IN GRIEF:

Life has changed and with that change you will have new needs and so you will need new skills.

These new needs may be:

- Autonomy and Independence
- New Meaning or Purpose
- Isolation: for contemplation, self expression, prayer meditation.
- Connection: Affection, compassion, being heard, supportive friends, practical friends.
- Security: Finances, a safe place, commitment from others.
- Physical needs: Nourishment, exercise, sleep.
- Emotional needs: Talking with family, friends, support groups, writing.
- Movement: Exercise, walk, dance, yoga, etc.
- Creative expression: Form a foundation, art or craft, renovations, gardening, make a memory box or book.
- Meditation/Prayer
- Acknowledging and Validating your feelings

Find the people and information you need to support you with these changes. You do not need to do it all on your own. See the back of this brochure for resources.

It is normal, and helpful, to keep your connection to your loved one who has died through talking to them, visiting special places, taking action in their name, making things with them in mind, looking at photos, having keepsakes.

- Take time to check in and see how you are on the inside as well as the outside.
- Ask yourself what you need to feel better that is possible right now and get those needs met.
- If you feel stuck in one place in your grief, at any time, even years or decades later, it is never too late to ask for help.



SUPPORTING OTHERS IN GRIEF:

This is by no means exhaustive, but rather a list of some suggestions that may be appropriate 'some of the time in some situations' :

- Let the person talk about what has happened. Learn what the loss, death or funeral means for them.
- Be a good listening ear. Ask open-ended questions. Reflect their words back to them.
- Try to understand if the loss is an isolated single event or part of a chain of losses.
- Explore the relationship of this loss to other losses they have experienced. How have they dealt with their losses? What have they learned about themselves from other losses?
- Recognise the intensity of feelings that can arise from any loss that has significance for the person experiencing that loss.
- Allow time.
- Try to identify and label the feelings that are there.
- Suggest and explore creative ways of externalising the feelings and reactions to the loss.
- Understand that exploration of "the new self" is rather like living through adolescence all over again.
- Try to retain as many safe and secure regions as possible.
- Explore available resource people, organisations and activities and identify their location.
- Support those who are in turn acting in a supportive role for the person or group you are assisting.
- Remember the need for practical support to assist day to day living.¹⁴ Encourage all people affected by the loss to interact when they are ready and able to do so.
- Be aware of the changing range of responses into the future.
- Provide adequate and appropriate information to each individual involved at a level they can understand.
- Explain issues carefully. Never assume understanding.
- Encourage sharing with others who have "been there done that" but who also have moved forward creatively.
- Explore internal resources and identify and label those same resources.
- Be mindful that maturing may raise new issues to be dealt with in the future, or the need for issues to be handled in a new way.
- Try to avoid using clichés and neat solutions.
- Don't ever abuse trust or confidentiality. If words spoken in confidence need to be passed on address that issue directly with the person you are working with.
- Be sensitive to the likely 'triggers' and special occasions that will arise and if appropriate be there for support at such a time.
- Be there but give space.
- Explore defences and coping styles that may be unhelpful and affirm behaviour that is appropriate. Encourage and reassure.

FURTHER SUPPORT

BEREAVEMENT AND GRIEF SUPPORT SERVICES

Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement – www.grief.org.au | 1300 664 786

Compassionate friends – www.compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au | (03) 9888 4944 or 1800 641 091

Mercy Western Grief Services – (03) 9364 9838

Road Trauma Support Team – 1300 367 797

Sid and Kids Victoria – 1800 240 400

Victims Support Agency – 1800 819 817

Lifeline – 13 11 14

Griefline – (03) 9935 7400

Mensline – 1300 78 99 78

Kids Helpline – 1800 55 1800

Reach Out – www.reachout.com.au (for adolescents)

Amber Community: Road Trauma Support Team – 1300 367 797

Gather My Crew – www.gathermycrew.org.au

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT

General Practitioner

Grief Counselling

Art Therapy

Traditional Chinese Medicine

Hypnotherapy

Emotional Freedom

Kinesiology E.M.D.R.

Mindfulness Meditation

Yoga

Abbey
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Frances Tobin
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Peter Tobin
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INCORPORATING HERBERT KING FUNERALS, HOWARD SQUIRES FUNERALS, JAMES FERRIS FUNERALS

For 24 Hour Service & Enquiries please telephone
our Funeral Advice Line: **13 19 34**

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