



Bereavement Care

GENERAL BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT

INFORMATION FOR STAFF

NSW DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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www.health.nsw.gov.au

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General Bereavement Support Information for Staff

For further copies of this document please contact:
Better Health Centre – Publications Warehouse
Locked Mail Bag 5003
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Further copies of this booklet can be downloaded from
our website: www.health.nsw.gov.au

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Useful Websites

Bonnie Babes Foundation

www.bbf.org.au

The Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Support Group (SANDS)

www.sands.org.au

Sids and Kids Online

www.sidsaustralia.org.au

Mothers in Support and Sympathy (MISS) Foundation

www.missfoundation.org

Bereavement Care Centre

www.bereavementcare.com.au

Counseling For Loss & Life Changes (CLLC)

www.counselingforloss.com

GriefLink

www.grieflink.asn.au

GriefNet.org

www.griefnet.org

National Association for Loss And Grief (NSW) Inc.

www.nalag.org.au

The Compassionate Friends New South Wales Inc. (TCF NSW)

www.thecompassionatefriends.org.au

Web Healing

www.webhealing.com

Inclusion of services in 'Additional Help' and 'Useful Websites' does not imply endorsement by the NSW Department of Health.

Northern Rivers Area Health Service

Interrelate Counselling and Mediation 02 6621 4970

Northern Sydney Area Health ServiceCentacare Family & Relationship Counselling 02 9476 8433
Grief Support Inc. 02 9489 6644
Interrelate Counselling and Mediation 02 9680 4386
Relationships Australia 02 9418 8800
Salvation Army 02 9419 8695**Southern Area Health Service**Centacare Family & Relationship Counselling – Bega 02 6492 4203
Centacare Family & Relationship Counselling – Manuka 02 6239 7700
Interrelate Counselling and Mediation 02 9545 3566**South Eastern Sydney Area Health Service**Relationships Australia 02 9387 4211
Sydney Sexual Health Centre 02 9382 7440
Southern Community Welfare Inc. 02 9545 0299**South Western Sydney Area Health Service**UNIFAM Counselling & Mediation Services 02 4628 1577
Lifeline Suicide Support Group 02 4645 7216**Wentworth Area Health Service**Anglicare Counselling 02 4731 6467
Community Health Bereavement Counselling 1800 013 101
Nepean Cancer Care Centre 02 4734 3500
Interrelate Counselling and Mediation 02 9680 4386
UNIFAM Counselling & Mediation Services 02 4732 3836**Western Sydney Area Health Service**Centacare Family & Relationship Counselling – Blacktown 02 9671 2011
Centacare Family & Relationship Counselling – Parramatta 02 9630 7788
Companions Offering Grief Support 02 9881 1200
Interrelate Counselling and Mediation 02 9745 5544
Relationships Australia 02 9806 3299
Survivors of Suicide 02 4648 2224

Bereavement support services may also be provided by religious and spiritually based organisations.

This is not an exhaustive list of all bereavement care services available in NSW. Contact your local Community Health Centre, Mental Health Service or The Association for Mental Health NSW Information Service for further information on other relevant bereavement support services.

Introduction

Every year in NSW more than 44 000 people die. For each of these deaths, bereaved persons are left behind. These include parents, spouses, children, siblings and friends, of whom some could be at risk of detrimental effects to their mental and physical health. Services for bereaved people are an important part of the NSW health care system. Research has confirmed that health professionals working in a variety of frontline situations including hospitals, community health centres, hospices and aged care facilities play an extremely important part in helping the bereaved to cope with their loss. Staff in these situations tend to have the most frequent contact with the bereaved which means they are often called upon to provide general support.

This brochure contains information on providing general bereavement support for NSW Health staff. It is designed to supplement the *General Bereavement Support Training CDROM* released by NSW Health.

For more information on the training program telephone 02 9391 9000. This brochure is also available electronically on the NSW Health Website.

Who does Bereavement Affect?

Everyone will encounter death and suffer a bereavement at some point in their lives. The death of someone significant can be a most painful and emotionally disturbing experience. A normal reaction to loss and grief is unique in its impact, course and meaning for each individual. The loss can cause intensive grief because it is so final, however grief is generally not a significant threat to a person's long term health and well being unless complicated grief is present. Complicated grief occurs when an individual's response to significant loss remains stuck in an unresolved and long-lasting state. The aim of bereavement support is to assist the bereaved to accommodate their loss and grief and to reduce the incidence of complicated grief.

Anticipatory Grief

When a person is facing a life threatening illness or injury, they and/or their loved ones may experience anticipatory grief. Anticipating the loss that is coming and feeling helpless to do anything to change the inevitable can be just as painful as other grieving. Throughout the time of anticipatory grief, it is important to provide as much caring support as possible to those facing death and to their families and loved ones.

Dealing with the Bereaved

Here are some key points to remember when dealing with the bereaved:

- grief is not an illness
- grief is a unique process for each individual
- grieving cannot be hurried
- there is no right or wrong way to grieve
- you cannot take away a bereaved person's pain
- people have different feelings and beliefs
- be understanding, supportive and empathetic
- respect their confidences
- some people may be unable to come to terms with the painful reality of the event and remain unable to move on with life
- know how to recognise abnormal/complicated patterns of grief

The Needs of the Bereaved

People who are bereaved may need the opportunity to:

- ...feel safe
- ...feel supported
- ...express their feelings as they grieve
- ...tell their story

Far West Area Health Service

Centacare Family & Relationship Counselling 02 6872 1551

Greater Murray Area Health Service

Centacare Family & Relationship Counselling – Albury 02 6041 6800
Centacare Family & Relationship Counselling – Deniliquin 03 5881 5916
Centacare Family & Relationship Counselling – Leeton 02 6953 2988
Centacare Family & Relationship Counselling – Wagga Wagga 02 6931 7911
Centacare Family & Relationship Counselling – West Wyalong 02 6972 3218
Greater Murray Suicide & Bereavement Support Group 1300 133 911

Hunter Area Health Service

Centacare Family & Relationship Counselling 02 6542 5677
Compassionate Friends 02 4920 6625
Interrelate Counselling and Mediation 02 4969 6313
Lifeline Suicide Support Group 02 4961 5355
Relationships Australia 02 4969 3977
UNIFAM Counselling & Mediation Services 02 4943 9186

Illawarra Area Health Service

Anglicare Counselling 02 4229 7911
Centacare Family & Relationship Counselling – Nowra 02 4227 1122
Centacare Family & Relationship Counselling – Wollongong 02 4421 8248
Relationships Australia 02 4228 7711
UNIFAM Counselling & Mediation Services 02 4229 9863

Macquarie Area Health Service

Grief Helpline (Lourdes Hospital) 02 6841 8540
Centacare Family & Relationship Counselling 02 6889 4932
Interrelate Counselling and Mediation – Dubbo 02 6882 4699
Interrelate Counselling and Mediation – Orange 02 6882 4699
National Association for Loss & Grief
– Dubbo Centre for Loss & Grief 02 6882 9222

Mid North Coast Area Health Service

Interrelate Counselling and Mediation 02 6651 1010

Mid Western Area Health Service

Centacare Family & Relationship Counselling – Bathurst 02 6331 8944
Centacare Family & Relationship Counselling – Forbes 02 6851 1991

New England Area Health Service

Centacare Family & Relationship Counselling 02 6762 1783

Additional Help

General Contacts

Baptist Community Services	02 9708 2088
Bereavement CARE Centre	1300 654 556
Cancer Helpline	13 11 20
Centacare Family & Relationship Counselling (Southern NSW)	1800 800 517
Compassionate Friends	1800 671 621
Coronial Grief Counselling Service – Glebe	02 8584 7800
Coronial Grief Counselling Service – Westmead	02 9845 6001
Gay & Lesbian Counselling Service	1800 184 527
Homicide Victims' Support Group (Aust) Inc.	1800 191 777
Interrelate Counselling and Mediation	1300 736 966
Kids Helpline	1800 55 1800
Lifeline	131114
Men's Phone Line	02 9979 9909
Men's Line Australia	1300 789 978
National Association for Loss & Grief (NSW) Inc.	02 8230 1527
National Centre for Childhood Grief	1300 654 556
Parents Line	13 20 55
Salvation Army Care Line	02 9331 6000
Solace Association Inc.	02 9817 4676
Sudden Infant Death Association	1800 651 186
UNIFAM Counselling & Mediation Service	02 9633 4555

Contact the Association for Mental Health NSW Inc.

Information Service for links to a range of groups and services:

Sydney Metropolitan Area	02 9816 5688
Outside Sydney Metropolitan Area	1800 674 200

Central Coast Area Health Service

Centacare Family & Relationship Counselling	02 4324 6403
Interrelate Counselling and Mediation	02 4969 6313
UNIFAM Counselling & Mediation Service	02 4324 4387

Central Sydney Area Health Service

Anglicare Counselling	02 9799 9311
Central Sydney Palliative Care Bereavement Service	02 9767 6799
Gay & Lesbian Counselling Service	02 9207 2800
Sudden Infant Death Association	02 9681 4500
W.N. Bull Grief & Bereavement Support Services	02 9519 5344

...have their experience acknowledged and their distress and emotional pain validated

...progressively deal with the reality of their loved one's death

...be able to move towards re-establishing their lives

...be able to go on living in a meaningful way

...be an active participant in decision-making

The Key to Good Listening Skills

- Warmth and caring
- Empathy
- Summarising
- Respect
- Genuineness
- Limit your own talking
- Clarifying
- Don't interrupt
- Non-judgmental acceptance
- Use open-ended questions
- Don't say "I know how you feel"
- Turn off your own fears, worries and problems
- Listen for FEELINGS
- Don't assume or jump to conclusions
- Concentrate and focus your attention
- Resist the urge to problem solve

You can Help by Being

- ...aware** Working through grief is a normal process, so know what to expect.
- ...there** Take the time to listen and empathise.
- ...sensitive** Encourage the bereaved to share their thoughts and feelings when they can.
- ...compassionate** Be supportive and non-judgmental.
- ...understanding** The loss of a significant person can be a most painful and emotionally disturbing experience.
- ...respectful** Refer to the dead person by their name (except for some cultures).

...helpful	Be practical in your offers of support.
...considerate	Allow people to grieve in their own way.
...tolerant	Tolerate silences and individual reactions.
...accepting	Accept that tears are normal and healthy.
...accommodating	Allow the bereaved to express unhappiness.
...an active listener	Encourage talk about the deceased including their special endearing qualities, and other aspects.
...patient	Mourning the loss of a loved one can take time but ensure expectations are realistic.
...prepared	Understand how grief can manifest itself and be vigilant for signs of complicated grief.
...ready	Know to whom the bereaved can be referred if they need more help.
...open	Provide information supportively.

Factors which Affect Grief

- Whether the death was sudden or expected
- The significance of the relationship between the bereaved and the deceased
- Circumstances surrounding the death
- The nature of the relationship between the bereaved and the deceased
- The resultant change in lifestyle
- The physical and mental health of the bereaved person
- Religious and spiritual beliefs of the bereaved
- Cultural response to death
- Age of the deceased person
- Number of losses or other major stresses (past and concurrent) experienced by the bereaved
- Perceived level of family/interpersonal and community support
- The way children grieve varies according to age

What is Complicated Grief?

People who experience problems accommodating their grief and whose feelings and behaviour extend outside the boundaries of what is acknowledged as normal by society, may be suffering abnormal or complicated grief. Because they are overwhelmed by their grief they may resort to maladaptive behaviours or remain in a state of chronic grief without progression. This can adversely affect their relationships and may lead to an increased risk of physical and/or mental illnesses. Their behaviour may result in harm to themselves and/or to others. Complicated grief can be described as having two main forms: the absence of grief and prolonged or chronic grief. The absence of an outward show of grief does not necessarily mean that the person is not grieving, however emotional shut down and/or the inability to grieve a significant loss is outside usual grief patterns. Prolonged acute grieving, and a grief reaction that manifests itself in destructive physical, social and or psychological behaviours or one that has negative outcomes in relationships, is considered to be complicated.

With traumatic bereavement it is important to understand that the person may be experiencing both a traumatic stress reaction and a bereavement response. Often the range of responses to traumatic bereavement is complex. Distress may fluctuate and be very prolonged.

It is important to be able to identify those potentially at risk from complicated grief. Bereavement counselling for complicated grief is a specialist area so if in doubt, refer.