

supporting a young person experiencing grief

how parents can help



Everyone experiences grief differently, so it can be hard to know how a young person might respond to loss. However, there are a lot of ways parents and carers can support a young person experiencing grief.

Some other strategies that may be helpful in supporting a young person include:

- *Acknowledge their loss and the need to take time to grieve*
- *Provide information about normal patterns of grief*
- *Talk openly and honestly about the loss and your willingness to support them*
- *Ask them what they might need from you*
- *Be patient. Someone experiencing grief can be unpredictable. Responding to their needs in a way that is calm, consistent and responsive will help them to feel safe and connected with you.*
- *Encourage their continued participation in enjoyable activities such as sports or hobbies, and family activities*
- *Support them as they gather stories and memories of the person they are grieving for*
- *Help them find meaning in what has happened and foster a sense of hope for the future*
- *Help them to anticipate times that may be particularly difficult and develop a plan for coping with these periods, this can include funerals and memorial services*
- *Allow young people to make an informed decision about attending funeral or memorial services and explain what they can expect to happen at services. Let them know that it's OK not to attend, too.*
- *Take a lead role in supporting them and remain with them during any service, whether they attend in person or via a livestream during COVID restrictions. This provides you with the chance to see how they're coping, and if they might need further support.*
- *Accessing professional support is particularly important if the young person is grieving for someone who has died by suicide.*

If you're also experiencing grief, it is important to check in on yourself, and access support if you need it. Modelling proactive self-care behaviours can have a big impact on how your young person responds to their grief.

For support you can check in with your local GP, contact your nearest headspace centre, or try online or phone-based services such as eheadspace, Kids Helpline or Lifeline. For more information go to <https://headspace.org.au/friends-and-family/understanding-grief-and-loss-for-family-and-friends/>