

# Resources for support

## Suggested reading

***Coping with Grief*** Mal McKissock

***A Grief Observed*** C.S. Lewis

***Good Grief*** Westberg Granger E

Your local library will have other books on grief and bereavement.

## Suggested websites & support groups

**National Association for Loss & Grief**

P 02 6882 9222

[www.nalag.org.au](http://www.nalag.org.au)

**Australian Centre for Grief & Bereavement**

P 03 9265 2100 or Toll Free 1800 642 066

[www.grief.org.au](http://www.grief.org.au)

**Bereavement Care Centre**

P 1300 654 556

[www.bereavementcare.com.au](http://www.bereavementcare.com.au)

**National Centre for Childhood Grief**

P 1300 654 556

[www.childhoodgrief.org.au](http://www.childhoodgrief.org.au)

**Solace** (for widows & widowers)

P 02 9519 2820

[www.solace.org.au](http://www.solace.org.au)

**Compassionate Friends**

(for bereaved parents)

P 02 9290 2355

[www.thecompassionatefriends.org.au](http://www.thecompassionatefriends.org.au)

## Other grief related pamphlets

Understanding grief

Children & grief: information for parents

# Contact

If you are concerned about what is happening to you, or have any further questions in regard to this information, you can contact the following people during business hours:

## Bereavement counsellor/coordinator

**South West Sydney**

*Braeside Hospital (Prairiewood)*

*SWSLHD Area Palliative Care Service*

P 02 9616 8678 or 02 9616 8649

Southern Highlands Bereavement Care Service (*Bowral*)

(A sliding scale of fees applies)

P 02 4862 1701

[www.shbcs.org.au](http://www.shbcs.org.au)

**Northern Sydney**

*Greenwich Hospital*

P 02 9903 8333

## Local social worker or hospital chaplain

To find a social worker or hospital chaplain contact your local hospital or Community Palliative Care Service.

## Lifeline

13 11 14

A 24-hour community telephone service providing information and support by trained volunteers.

**These services are free of charge.**

## HammondCare main office

Level 2, 447 Kent Street

Sydney NSW 2000

P 02 8280 8444

F 02 9267 3103

 **HammondCare**  
An independent Christian charity

Grief: coping with anniversaries, religious celebrations and special occasions

**Palliative Care Bereavement Service**



 **HammondCare**  
An independent Christian charity

# Grief: coping with anniversaries, religious celebrations and special occasions

## Anniversaries

You may experience unexpected increases in your feelings of grief on special days during the year, which are important and meaningful to you and your family, such as birthdays, anniversaries, and other events. These feelings can also be triggered by other experiences such as hearing a meaningful song or visiting places that bring back memories. Remember that it is normal to feel a heightened sense of grief on these days and in response to these experiences when you are most reminded of your loss.

You may find it useful to think about the days that might be difficult and plan accordingly – you might like to spend the day with family or friends, plan an activity, or have time to yourself. You may find yourself experiencing an increase in your feelings of grief and may not understand the cause, only to realise later that a significant date is approaching or has passed. This is very common.

## Religious celebrations

Religious celebrations are supposed to be a joyous time and a time that many people spend with family. You may experience anxiety and heightened grief when anticipating and planning the first special occasion without your loved one. This can be a time of intense grief and sorrow. How can you smile and pretend that all is well on the outside when your heart is broken on the inside? Family traditions at these times can bring painful reminders of your loss.

You may want to continue with your established religious or family traditions or you may want to change them. You might consider rearranging the seating around the dinner table, opening gifts at a different time or decorating the house in a new fashion. It may also be helpful to start a new tradition such as a special gift to a charity in your loved one's memory. Family members who have passed away can be honoured by sharing fond memories, praying, lighting candles or quietly reflecting.

## Coping with these special occasions

Remember difficult feelings come and go, and they might be mixed with happy feelings and memories as well. Your grief for the person that has died never ends but it usually does change and become less intense as time goes on.

As your grief tends to surface more strongly at these times, you or others may feel that you are not coping as well as you should. However it is normal to experience these feelings. This does not mean that you are not coping but rather that you are grieving. In fact, coping and grieving usually happen at the same time. Grieving is a process – it is important to grieve in your own way and in your own time.

Although you cannot change your current situation, you can change the way you approach an occasion. Be prepared and try to plan how you wish to spend the time so that you can arrange it that way. There are no right or wrong answers to what you should or should not do on these occasions. You may want to continue with the traditions, or you may want to change them if you feel they are too painful. What you decide for this year can be changed next year. You can try something new or stay with the old way. Making a decision about what feels right for this occasion is often the best we can do.



## How to prepare for anniversaries, religious celebrations and special occasions

Here are some suggestions:

- Plan what you want to do and not want to do during this time.
- Your distress is normal. Others have felt, and currently feel, as you do right now.
- Do something to honour your loved one. Hang a special Christmas ornament on the tree, light a candle, plant some flowers.
- Recognise that the absence of your loved one will cause pain no matter what you do. This is often a time filled with bittersweet memories. You may find yourself reminiscing; sharing the memories with your family and friends can be helpful.
- Give yourself permission to have fun and experience joy when you can, just as you give yourself permission to mourn when you need to. Remember that feeling happy is not a betrayal; it does not mean you do not miss your loved one.
- Tell people what you might find helpful. Sometimes concerned family or friends may be unsure about how to help. Encourage them to let you grieve in your own way and in your own time.
- Take it slow and easy. Rest if you feel tired. Don't overwhelm or over commit yourself.