

A COMMUNITY'S APPROACH TO GRIEF

Information to help community leaders support their community through tragedy and grief.

What do I say to people directly affected by a tragedy next time I see them in public?

- It's completely normal and human to want to check in on our neighbours/friends/family and express care.
- If you see someone in public, trying to be as 'normal' as possible might be the best approach.
- A simple "G'day, how's the shopping going?" could be all that is needed.
- Letting them know you are there and care is okay too. However, it's often best to let them raise the grief and not yourself.
- Even if you express care and concern, the person may not want to talk about the incident. Respond to their cues and don't push them to talk if they don't want to.

When is the right time to reach out?

- Perhaps waiting until they approach you might be a good start.
- While a text, phone call or a visit is well intended, be mindful they may not respond right away or at all, as they may be overwhelmed with support from many people. This is okay and quite normal.
- If you feel you would like to offer support, do so in a gentle way without expectation of a return communication.

How long should we wait to host an event in the name of the deceased?

- Consulting with family is the ideal approach here, and be mindful the family may not desire an event in their name.
- It is also recommended the community has one person who is the 'touchpoint' to the family who will communicate between the family and community. This way the family isn't bombarded with multiple requests and different people wanting to help.

What are ways a community group can honour the deceased in the long term?

How long should we continue hosting events in the name of the deceased?

- Similar to above, consulting with the family is ideal.
- Perhaps the family is okay with an ongoing event named after the deceased, however some may not want to resurface these emotions in a public way.
- An appropriate response would also depend on the circumstances of the deceased. For example, for a child, a plaque at the school may be significant. Or, for a 50 year member of a footy club, an annual game may be appropriate.
- Each situation is different, so consulting family is key.

We want to create a financial support campaign such as gofundme. Is this a good idea and how do we appropriately create the fund?

- Gofundme is a nice, easy and anonymous way of supporting the family.
- Be mindful, some people may not want community funds raised, so checking with the family is appropriate.
- Perhaps have a close family member or the community 'touchpoint' person arrange any fundraising campaigns.
- While financial support can be helpful, sometimes more tangible resources and supports can help in ways finances cannot.
- Practical help such as meals, grocery shopping, mowing lawns, fixing fences, caring for animals, school drop offs, and funeral arrangements can be valuable ways to support a family in times of need.
- Practical support can be coordinated at a community level through a roster or volunteer system (there are apps that can help with this).

When is it appropriate for the community to get back to normal or start enjoying life again?

- The short answer is as soon as possible. As unfortunate and heart breaking as tragic events can be, life goes on.
- As a community, the hope is to encourage 'normal' activity a few weeks after a tragedy.
- Be aware the expectation of things 'going back to normal' will be different for everybody, especially those closest to the deceased.
- Understanding everyone grieves differently is key here, and consultation with the family can be important as well.
- Research suggests grieving family members should resume normal functioning of sleep, eating, working etc within 2-4 weeks. If this is not happening, it's recommended they seek professional support.

Closure processes after an incident

- After an unexpected incident, there are some steps to the closure process which need consideration.
- Are there possessions of the deceased that need to be collected? How will their spot be filled on the footy team? Who will delete their name off the school or work system? What will happen to their social media accounts? What will happen on the 1 year anniversary? Who can attend the funeral? Will there be a memorial service for people who can't attend the funeral?
- It can be difficult to think of everything, but consider what these steps to closure might look like and who can lead the family and community through these processes.

For 24/7 or crisis support:

- Lifeline 13 11 14
- Beyond Blue 1300 22 4636
- Kids Help Line (under 25) 1800 55 1800

Other support:

- Griefline 1300 845 745
- RFDS (07) 4652 5800



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For support: call 0417 703 729 or email support@outbackfutures.org.au