

SUPPORTING OTHERS THROUGH GRIEF

Everyone's different

- Grieving can look different for everybody and there is no 'one way to grieve'.

Grief is a journey

- It can be helpful to be aware of the '5 Stages of Grief'* - **Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, Acceptance**
- This is not a linear process, and other emotions and behaviours can be experienced.
- This is a useful guide to understand where people potentially are in this process.
- People may bounce back and forth between certain emotions, and they can experience other emotions besides the 5 listed.
- Some other experiences or emotions might be – shock, 'numbness', absence, frustration, ambivalence, confusion, and more.

Normalise emotions

- It's helpful when both individuals and a community encourage and support people to name and share their emotions - this is known as **normalising emotions**.
- Normalising emotions is key to supporting someone through the grieving process.
- Behaviour is different to emotion. Be aware if people's behaviour becomes concerning (see below).

Know your limits

- You may be grieving yourself and at differing stages of the process.
- It is NOT your job to take away their emotions - your role is simply to support and be there.
- Knowing how much you can support someone else can depend on you knowing your limits as well.
- Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Trauma are very real phenomena for the human experience around this type of situation.
- Make sure you seek support if the above becomes a concern.

Support without judgement

- **Holding space** means walking alongside and supporting someone without judging them or making them feel inadequate.
- Holding space can happen individually, or collectively when a community is grieving.

Create opportunities to hold space

- Ensure it is a good time to talk, and it's a private and confidential space.
- If not a good time, set up a time where you can be completely present for the person, without distractions.
- Listen with empathy and open body language.
- When responding, potentially paraphrase or repeat back what you hear, and use their language especially about emotions.
- Ask about what supports they have around them.
- Try not to make it about you or assume when they should be 'over the grief'.
- Make a time to follow up and commit to this follow up.
- When following up, ask about what supports they utilised that were discussed above (this helps them to understand you paid attention and care).

*5 Stages of Grief developed by Kubler-Ross

When should you be concerned?

- Generally speaking, in the field of grieving and events like this, we explore the ability to get back to 'normal functioning'. If we find people are not able to attend work, sleep, eat etc. after 2-4 weeks, we should seek professional support. Note, this is very subjective and case by case review would be required.
- If a person's behaviour is problematic (eg excessive drinking, violence, talk of self harm etc) professional support is recommended.

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



allied & mental health
community wellbeing
outbackfutures.org.au   

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