

'GOOD GRIEF'

- 6 TIPS FOR COPING WITH LOSS

Helpful tips shared with us by Janet Mikkelson of Aroha funerals to help you, and your family and friends cope with the loss of a loved one.

Losing someone close to you is incredibly hard, and grief touches everyone differently. There's no rulebook for how to feel or how long it takes. What matters is knowing you're not alone - support is here when you need it.

Top tips to deal with grief

1 Grieving takes time

There's no 'normal' amount of time it takes for grief to pass, so it's important to acknowledge how you're feeling and to remember that self-care is an integral part of the healing process. There is no hurry to grieve – you'll get lots of well-meaning advice from many people, who often expect you to start 'moving on' after a while. But remember that what worked for them may not work for you. It can take months or years for you to start moving forward and that's okay.

It's okay to be selfish during this time too. You don't have to please everyone – it's alright to say 'actually, I'm really tired, I don't want visitors at the moment' or 'I just need some 'me-time'. It's important to look after yourself and, in fact, it's a healthy thing to do.

2 Everyone's grief is different

It's important not to compare yourself to others and how they've managed the grieving process. Everyone feels differently: some people might cry every day for two years, while others can't cry at all because they feel numb. Go with what feels right for you, because that's how you'll get through it in your own way.

3 Grief can be physical

Our bodies and our emotions are intertwined, so it's common to have a physical reaction, such as overwhelming tiredness, anxiety, insomnia, memory loss, or even an upset stomach or nausea.

If you're experiencing any physical symptoms that you're worried about, it's best to see a healthcare professional. Particularly if it's been a sudden or shocking death, grief can take away your sense of security and create anxiety that something else may go wrong.

4 Get help if you need it

There are many incredible people and organisations offering grief support across Aotearoa. Support groups, for example, can help you process your grief and provide a space to keep sharing memories of your loved one.

Grief counselling can help you learn the skills to cope during this traumatic time. If your grief becomes so overwhelming that you can't function during the day, or sleep at night, then make sure you get some help - see the box below for organisations that can support you.

5 Join local groups or social networks

Women tend to have good support groups in place already, but men often end up much lonelier after losing a partner. If that sounds like you, you could try joining a local men's group or a 'Men's Shed', when you're ready. For both men and women, social and support networks like Virtual Village East are a great way to overcome loneliness and meet new people. Connecting with others who have experienced loss can provide comfort and reassurance, reminding you that you're not alone.

6 Remember that it will get better

Know that you will get through this. At first, it may feel like your heart has been ripped out. But after some time, the acute pain starts to dull – grief may not go away entirely, but it does get easier. Things will get better, and you will laugh and enjoy life again.

"Life is full of grief, to exactly the degree we allow ourselves to love other people."

– Orson Scott Card

NEED GRIEF SUPPORT?

It's a good idea to seek support to help you process your grief. You could talk to your GP, our chaplain at HBH, a local pastor or priest, or one of the nurses at HBH. Alternatively, two grief counselling organisations recommended by Janet from Aroha Funerals are **The Grief Centre** and **Skylight**.



As a charitable organisation, we aim to create opportunities for all older people to age well and live fully, through homes, care, community and advocacy.



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