

Grief

Grief is a normal reaction to the death of a loved one. Something that most people manage to come to terms with over the course of time. Although it is associated with a period of intense suffering, for many it does not require the help of professional counsellors. For some however, grief reactions can be significant and prolonged and interfere with day to day functioning. Marital stress is very common. The circumstances of a death such as when the death is sudden and unexpected and with the cause unknown, can impact on the grief response leading to what is known as a complicated grief reaction. If you have experienced a sudden unexpected death in your family you may benefit from talking to a counsellor.

Grief is often perceived as something to “get over” in a fixed period of time. In fact grief is not a straight, linear process; it is circular and cyclical and can be described as occurring in phases. There is much overlap, and passing back and forth through these phases. The general view these days is that bereaved individuals do not “get over” their loss and get back to normal, but rather adapt and adjust to the changed situation.

Grief reactions can be described as emotional, behavioural, physical and psychological. Some common reactions are listed below;

- Emotional grief reactions - depression, despair, anxiety, guilt, anger, hostility and loneliness.
- Behavioural grief reactions - agitation, fatigue, crying and social withdrawal.
- Physical grief reactions - loss of appetite, sleep disturbances, energy loss and exhaustion.
- Psychological grief reactions – preoccupation with thoughts of the deceased, lowered self esteem, helplessness and hopelessness, a sense of unreality and memory and concentration difficulties.

A range of support services is available to assist bereaved persons through their grief process. Below are some websites of support groups, alternatively speak to your GP or local community health centre for more information.

Support Groups

Skylight

www.skylight.org.nz

NALAG Centre for Loss and Grief (Australia)

www.nalag.org.au

Lifeline Australia

www.lifeline.org.au

Lifeline New Zealand

www.lifeline.co.nz