

Grief After Loss

Supporting you through your bereavement

Te tautoko i a koe roto i to pouri





Ehara tōku toa I te toa takitahi
He toa takitini tōku toa.

My strength is not due to me alone,
but due to the strength of many.



This booklet has been created for you and your whānau.
We hope it will be helpful, and you may also like to pass it on
to help others who are experiencing a bereavement.

Grief is a natural response to loss

It is normal to experience grief when we lose someone.

Losing someone close can affect us emotionally, physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Sometimes we may not know how to manage the impact of grief.

Grief is unique - there is no right or wrong way to grieve.

Grief is also shaped by family, cultural background, and personal experiences.

Grief is personal

The grieving process takes time. Healing happens gradually and it cannot be forced or hurried. There is no 'normal' way to grieve. Some people start to feel better in weeks or months. For others, the grieving process is measured in years. Whatever your grief experience is, it is important to be patient with yourself and allow the process to naturally unfold.



How a person dies might affect how you grieve

The way a person dies can significantly shape the grieving process, particularly when the death was expected, such as in the case of someone who was terminally ill. When death follows a prolonged illness, loved ones may begin grieving long before the actual loss, experiencing anticipatory grief as they witness the person's gradual decline. This can bring a complex mix of emotions, - relief that suffering has ended, guilt for feeling that relief, or perhaps a sadness that deepens once the death occurs.

Knowing that the end is near may offer some time to prepare emotionally or say goodbye, which can help with the grief experience, but it does not always lessen the pain. In some cases, a terminal illness can create a sense of emotional exhaustion or numbness, making it hard to process the loss until later.

Grief is like waves in the ocean

Grief is often described as coming in waves, much like the ocean - sometimes calm, sometimes overwhelming. In the beginning, the waves can be constant and powerful, crashing over you with little warning and leaving you feeling breathless and unsteady. As time passes, the intensity of the waves may lessen, but they can still come unexpectedly, triggered by a memory, a song, or a quiet moment.

Some waves are small and gentle, while others hit hard and pull you under. You may feel like you are finally standing on solid ground, only to be knocked down again. But over time, you learn to ride the waves. You may not be able to stop them, but you become stronger, more balanced, and better able to stay afloat. Grief does not disappear, but like the sea, it changes, and so does your ability to navigate it.

How long does grief last?

Grief does not follow a set timeline. It is an unpredictable, up-and-down process that varies widely from person to person. Some days may feel manageable, even hopeful, while others can trigger that wave of sadness that seems to come out of nowhere. Over time, your capacity to carry grief changes. It does not necessarily get smaller, but you may grow around it, learning how to live with the loss in a way that feels less overwhelming.

Milestones, anniversaries, or unexpected reminders can stir emotions long after the initial loss. This is a normal part of grieving. Healing is not linear, and there is no 'right' amount of time to grieve. It really is a deeply personal journey.

How we can be mindful as we grieve?

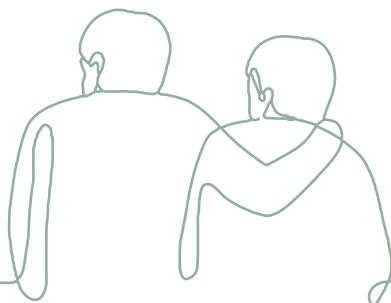
- Understand each other's unique needs as we grieve.
- Commit to caring for and respecting one another during this time.
- Recognise that it is okay to ask for help when we need it.
- Allow ourselves to laugh and live without feeling guilty.
- Share our stories when we feel ready and comfortable.
- Prepare ourselves to face the reality of our loss.
- Try to find a balance if we feel like withdrawing from the world.
- Understand that others may not always know how to help because they worry about saying the wrong thing.
- Remember that sometimes, people might not be able to comfort us if they are grieving too.

How grief might feel

Grief can feel like a storm of conflicting emotions that are hard to predict or control. You might feel deep sadness that seems to settle on your chest, or numbness that makes everything around you feel distant and unreal. Anger may arise at the situation, at others, or even at the person who die. Loneliness can feel especially sharp in their absence.

At the same time, there might be moments of relief, especially if the person had been suffering, which can be confusing and lead to guilt. Regret may surface too, over things left unsaid or undone. These emotions don't arrive in a tidy order; they can overlap, shift suddenly, or repeat themselves. Grief is rarely one feeling. It is a complex, often painful mix that reflects the depth of the loss and the relationship you had with your lost one.

Grief doesn't just affect emotions. It can take a toll on the mind and body as well. Many people feel an overwhelming sense of exhaustion, as if simply getting through the day takes all their energy. Confusion, brain fog and forgetfulness are also common, making it hard to focus, remember details, or complete everyday tasks. Some may feel a sense of rejection or abandonment, especially if the death was sudden or the relationship was complicated.



Give yourself time

It is important to treat yourself with kindness and patience. There are many ways to cope with loss. What helps one person may not work for another:

- Give yourself permission to cry when you need to.
- Talk about the person you have lost and keep their memory alive.
- Try journaling as a gentle way to express your feelings.
- Do what feels right for you, as long as it is safe for you and others, not what others think you should do.
- Stay connected with the people you love and trust.
- Avoid making big decisions immediately, if you do not feel confident to do so.
- Have a simple plan for each day, even if it is just making your bed or taking a walk.
- Talk to the person you have lost in your own way, especially if it brings you comfort.
- Be kind to yourself and take things one step at a time.



How grief changes over time

At the beginning of the grieving process, we may be overwhelmed by thoughts of the person we have lost. We may feel a deep longing and constantly search for ways to stay connected to them.

As we move through grief, we might find that:

- Painful thoughts and emotions can push us to seek ways to move beyond them.
- Our longing and preoccupation may inspire us to find new ways to feel connected to the person.
- It can be hard to fully engage in life when we are in deep pain, but often, without realising it, we start to find ways to ease our suffering.
- Over time, our ability to live with the loss grows. This allows space for new experiences and roles. As our life story moves forward, we can begin to embrace different possibilities.



Anniversaries and days special to you

Anniversaries, birthdays, holidays, and other special times can intensify grief, often bringing a fresh wave of emotion even years after a loss. These moments highlight the absence of the person in a deeply personal way, sometimes catching you off guard with renewed sadness or longing. Honouring and remembering your loved one during these times can bring comfort and connection.

You might light a candle, share stories, look through photos, cook their favourite meal, visit a meaningful place, or carry on a tradition they cherished. There's no right or wrong way to remember. It's about finding what feels meaningful to you and allowing space for both grief and love to coexist.



Positive things you can do to remember a loved one

These actions can help you feel connected, find peace, and carry your loved one's memory forward in a way that brings meaning and comfort.

- **Create a memory box**
Fill it with photos, letters, and keepsakes that remind you of them.
- **Write a letter**
Express your thoughts, memories, or things you wish you could say.
- **Plant a tree or garden**
Grow something beautiful in their memory.
- **Light a candle**
On special days or quiet moments to honour their presence.
- **Share stories**
Talk about them with friends and family to keep their memory alive.
- **Make a photo album or scrapbook**
Collect meaningful pictures and mementos.
- **Cook their favourite meal**
Enjoy it in their honour, perhaps with others who knew them.
- **Create a piece of art or music**
Channel your feelings into creativity.
- **Celebrate their birthday or anniversary**
In a way that feels right to you, whether quietly or with others.
- **Wear something of theirs**
A piece of clothing, jewellery, or accessory that brings comfort.
- **Visit a place that was special to them**
Reflect and connect with memories there.
- **Start a new tradition**
Something that reflects who they were and what they meant to you.
- **Keep a journal**
Record your memories, feelings, and how your relationship continues to influence you.



Bereavement Services

Waipuna Hospice Bereavement Support Service

Please let us know if you would like our support, and one of our bereavement support team members will be in touch with you as soon as possible. You can email bereavement@waipunahospice.org.nz or phone 07 552 4380.

Our services include:

- Grief support resources
- Bereavement Support Groups
- Navigating Grief Seminar
- Massages & Reflexology (subject to availability)
- Support with parenting through grief
- Grief support for children and adolescents
- Spiritual care
- Grief counselling

Bereavement Support Group

The Bereavement Support Group offers a safe, supportive environment where people who have lost a loved one can come together and connect. It's a space where you don't have to explain your grief as everyone there understands because they are walking a similar path.

Sharing experiences, listening to others, and simply being with people who 'get it' can bring comfort and a sense of belonging during an isolating time. The group is guided by compassionate facilitators and volunteers, and is designed to help you feel supported, heard, and less alone as you navigate life after loss. Whether you choose to talk or just listen, you're welcome exactly as you are. The group is for family members, friends and carers of patients who were in our care at Waipuna Hospice.



Navigating Grief Seminar

The Navigating Grief Seminar is a 2.5-hour session designed to gently support individuals through the complexities of grief in a compassionate and understanding environment. With refreshments provided, the seminar offers a relaxed and welcoming space where participants can explore the emotional, social, and psychological aspects of grief. Guided by skilled counsellors, the seminar takes a gentle psycho-social educational approach, helping attendees understand the grieving process while connecting with others who are also navigating loss. It is a valuable opportunity for shared learning, reflection, and finding comfort.

For information, or to register for the Bereavement Support Group or the Navigating Grief Seminar, please contact our bereavement team on 07 552 4380 or email bereavement@waipunahospice.org.nz.

Remembrance Service

The Waipuna Hospice Remembrance Service is a special and heartfelt occasion held twice a year, offering families and whānau a meaningful opportunity to come together in memory of their loved ones. These services provide a supportive and reflective space where people can honour those who have passed, share memories, and find comfort in community.

With a focus on compassion and connection, the Remembrance Service acknowledges the deep emotional journey of grief and remembrance, allowing individuals to celebrate the lives of those they have lost while being surrounded by others who understand and care.

If you have any questions about the Remembrance Service, please contact our bereavement team on 07 552 4380 or email bereavement@waipunahospice.org.nz.

Bereavement Counselling

Bereavement counselling at Waipuna Hospice provides compassionate, one-on-one support for individuals and families coping with loss. Our skilled counsellors offer a safe and confidential space to explore the complex emotions that arise during grief, helping clients navigate their unique journey toward healing and acceptance. Whether dealing with recent loss or ongoing grief, the counselling sessions are tailored to meet each person's needs, offering guidance, understanding, and practical strategies to cope. Through this supportive process, Waipuna Hospice aims to help individuals find hope and strength as they move forward. Online counselling sessions are also available.

Children & Young People Counselling

At Waipuna Hospice, we understand that children and young people experience grief in unique ways, and we provide specialised counselling to support them through their loss. Our play therapy room is a safe and nurturing environment where young people can express their feelings, ask questions, and learn healthy ways to cope. Through age-appropriate approaches, we help children and youth process their grief, build resilience, and find hope during challenging times.

We support parents and families/whanau who are caring for children suffering from grief and loss. This can include information, resources and guidance where needed. We also provide counselling support for parents and adolescents and play therapy for children over six years where it might prove beneficial. For younger children our focus is generally on parenting support.

Massage and Reflexology

If you are receiving bereavement support services at Waipuna Hospice, you are entitled to two sessions of either massage or reflexology. We offer massage and reflexology to bereaved family members as a way to support your wellbeing during this difficult time. These complementary therapies are provided by our generous team of qualified volunteer therapists. Please note that this service is subject to availability and may not always be offered depending on volunteer capacity.

If you're feeling overwhelmed with grief, remember that it's okay to reach out. There are various national helplines with trained professionals available for support:

National Helplines

If this is an emergency **call 111** or go to your closest emergency department.

Need to talk? Free **call or text 1737** any time for support from a trained counsellor.

Depression helpline **0800 111 757** or text **4202**.

www.lifeline.org.nz – 0800 543 354 (0800 LIFELINE) or free text **4357** (HELP).

Youthline – 24/7 Helpline: free call 0800 376 633, free text **234**, Webchat at youthline.co.nz, DM on Instagram @youthlinenz, or message on WhatsApp **09 886 5696**.

Suicide Crisis Helpline 24/7 – **0508 828 865** (0508 TAUTOKO).

www.lifeline.org.nz – **0800 269 4389** (0800 ANXIETY).

Links and resources that may be helpful:

www.skylight.org.nz

mentalhealth.org.nz/conditions/condition/grief-and-loss

mentalhealth.org.nz/helplines

www.griefsupport.org.nz

www.griefcentre.org.nz/resources





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Thank you to our supporters



**Western
Bay of Plenty**
District Council

Te Kaunihera
a rohe māi i
Ngā Kuri-a-Whārei ki
Otamarakau ki te Uru