

PARENT  
&  
GUARDIAN



# SELF-CARE AFTER IMMEDIATE LOSS



# HOW TO LOOK AFTER YOURSELF AFTER THE DEATH OF A LOVED ONE

The death of a loved one and the grief that follows can be hard topics to discuss with kids. We understand that as a parent or carer, you just want to be there for your kids, and know that they're expressing their grief in healthy ways.

This resource and our Grief Resource Hub are here to help you and your kids discuss grief and death in an age-appropriate way.

Please know that we are here to support you and your family – with Camps, resources like this one, and a community of people who understand what you're going through.

To get further support, please call us on **1300 602 465**. Or click any of the **"ENQUIRE NOW"** buttons on our website to fill out a quick questionnaire, which we'll use to match you with the right programs and support.

## HOW TO LOOK AFTER YOURSELF AFTER THE DEATH OF A LOVED ONE

### 1. MAKE ROOM FOR YOUR GRIEF

There is no right or wrong way to feel after losing a loved one. So many variables contribute to how you'll react to the loss, including your relationship with the person, your personality, and your history of loss. You may feel shocked, brokenhearted, anxious, or even numb to begin with. It's also natural to feel guilty for being still alive while your loved one is gone, relieved that he or she is no longer suffering, or even angry that he or she has left. Allow yourself the time and space to grieve. You may need to take time off of work or other responsibilities to look after yourself.

### 2. PREPARE YOURSELF FOR OTHERS' REACTIONS

Be prepared for family and friends to not know what to say, become distant, or attempt to comfort you with clichés, such as "she's in a better place" or "time heals all wounds". Often, well-meaning people are uncomfortable with talking about death, but it doesn't mean they don't genuinely care. Keep in mind that your family and friends are also grieving in their own way and doing the best they can.



### **3. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF**

Grieving takes a toll on your physical and emotional wellbeing. You may lose your appetite, lose sleep, become easily agitated and/or feel unmotivated to do anything. Be patient with yourself and focus on self-care. Of course, it may be easier said than done, but try to take care of yourself by eating well, exercising, and getting sleep. Try to avoid drowning your sorrows by drinking excessively, as that will likely add to your troubles. Research shows that the risk of death for a surviving spouse goes up, particularly in the first three months of bereavement. Taking care of yourself in the months after your loss will be essential, for you and for your children.

### **4. ASK FOR YOUR NEEDS**

In such a confusing and lonely time, it is very important to find ways to get your needs met. Research shows that the loss of a loved one can make you vulnerable to depression and anxiety. Ensuring you remain connected and reach out to others for the help you need is particularly important after loss.

### **5. CONNECT WITH OTHERS**

Social support is a key contributor to emotional wellbeing. The most self-compassionate action you can take is to connect with a social support system of caring individuals who provide the understanding and caring you need during this time. You may lean on those you already receive support from or even find a community of like-minded others also suffering the pain of loss.

## 5. THEY ARE NOT TO BLAME

While this may be obvious to you, kids tend to believe they cause things to happen by what they do or say. Children may focus heavily on what the death means to them (ie, "is it my fault?" or "who will read me stories?"). Reassure them by emphasizing that what's happening to their loved one isn't happening because of anything they did or said. Reassure them by addressing their concerns that they will continue to be loved and cared for, and what's happening to their loved one isn't happening because of anything they did or said.

## 6. WHAT'S NEXT?

Let your child know what will happen next. The death of their loved one will likely mean your child must cope with changes in their routine. Be clear about any new arrangements that have been made so they can adjust in anticipation of those changes. For example, "Aunt Beth will pick you up from school like Mum used to".

## 7. FUNERALS AND MEMORIALS

It's important to include your child in mourning rituals such as viewings, funerals, or memorial services. Explain ahead of time what will happen at these ceremonies. For example, "Lots of people who loved Daddy will be there. We will sing, pray, and talk about Daddy's life. People will cry and hug each other. Some people will come up to us and say things like, "I'm sorry for your loss". We can say, "Thank you" back to be polite. You can stay next to me and hold my hand if you want." You can highlight that people will be sharing memories of Daddy to celebrate his life, which helps people feel better.

Offer your child a role in the ceremony. Even a small role can help kids master the emotional situation and instill a memory of being a part of the collective grieving experience. Of course, allow your child to decide whether or not they would like to take part.

If you'd like to learn more about Feel the Magic or register your interest for one of our Camps, please don't hesitate to contact us. Just click any of the **"ENQUIRE NOW"** buttons on our website or give us a call on **1300 602 465**.

We have a range of Camps across Australia, both virtual and face-to-face. To find out more about our Camps, click [HERE](#).



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