

Tools2Thrive: Grief

1 Be prepared for stressful situations and events

Stressful times can include birthdays, holidays, anniversaries, or hearing stories that remind us of our loss. All of these events and anniversaries can be less worrying if we can be a bit prepared for them:

- Be aware of places that bring out strong memories and expect to have strong feelings there
- Plan activities, rituals and ceremonies – for remembrance and to acknowledge the loss
- Let ourselves be sad even if it is meant to be a happy occasion
- Let ourselves have fun and enjoy happy memories and the company of other people close to us
- Sometimes the time leading up to these events is the hardest. The day itself may not be as hard as we fear

3 Information for family and friends

It's hard to know how to help or what to say to someone who is grieving. These ideas may help:

- Let them know you care – acknowledge their loss and what it means to them
- Let them know how you feel – that you don't know what to say, but you are there for them if needed
- Be there to listen – when they want to talk, let them tell their story
- Let them know it's okay to share their grief
- Keep in touch – let them know you are there. Keep including them in activities. They may not wish to join in, but give them the option
- Be understanding – they may act differently to their usual selves
- Look out for signs of them being overwhelmed by bad feelings. This can include thinking about killing themselves, hurting themselves, hurting others, or giving up on everything
- Find help and information if they need or want extra support

2 When is grief a problem?

Sometimes we can't understand our loss and can't move on with life. We might become stuck grieving, worrying and feeling sad. We might become involved in a lot of activities to avoid feeling the pain of our loss. This can start to get in the way of the things we need to do in our lives. It can lead to family, relationship and work worries. It may lead to an increased risk of physical or mental illness. This is the time when we need to think about getting extra help. Talking to family, friends, counsellors or doctors can help us to feel stronger and start healing.

- Look after yourself – take time out and talk to someone about how you are feeling and coping during these stressful times

What not to do:

- Don't play down their loss
- Don't think you can take away their pain
- Don't tell them "You'll get over it"
- Don't say "I know how you feel" – everyone is different

We often do or say these things because we want to help, but best way to help the person is just to be there for them and connect them with professional support if they need help.