



## Seasons. Dealing with grief

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# *dealing with grief*

We know this is a difficult time for you. The death of a relative or friend is one of the most stressful things that happens in life. As you try to deal with your grief, it can be difficult to remember what your arranger said to you. It can be even more difficult to think of what you need to do next.

As a funeral director, keeping in touch with families in our community and making sure that they are coping is essential. We want to help you through the grief process and help you keep memories alive. Indeed, our directors can help this process from the first meeting, through the service and beyond. We like to think our care is open-ended.

We hope this booklet will answer some of your questions to help you as best as possible. It explains about some of the feelings you may have and suggests ways of caring for yourself.





# *the grief process*

Grief is not an emotion. It is a process and it does not have an order. Everyone's experience will be different and some may spend more time or go back and forth between certain stages than others. But all stages must be experienced for the process to be complete.

**Denial** is not being able to acknowledge the death. It is looking for the person in the old familiar places, setting the table for them.

**Anger** at the person for leaving, at God for taking them away. You will be blaming other people for not doing more and asking questions such as "why me?"

**Bargaining** – this usually takes place prior to the person passing away. It is when we plead, pray and beg for them not to leave or to come back and we try to "make deals" to keep them with us.

**Depression** is the overwhelming feelings of hopelessness, bitterness and frustration. You will be mourning the loss of not only the person, but the hopes, dreams and plans you had

shared together. We may feel numb, or there may even be thoughts of suicide.

Acceptance is different to resignation. Acceptance is when we are able to face the fact that the person is gone and realising that it is no-one's fault. It is a time to find the good that comes from the pain of loss and recalling fond memories. This is a time of personal growth and generally a feeling of strength.

Grieving is a process of recovery.

There are no rules about how you should feel – we are all different and our relationships vary. When we grieve, we can feel both physical and emotional pain.

## A tree in memory of your loved one

It is important for Seasons to help families through an understandably difficult time. Planting a tree in memory of a loved one is a way of celebrating their life. Seasons plants three trees in memory of each loved one following their funeral in conjunction with IWalkGreen - an initiative focused towards companies and individuals who are seeking to be carbon conscious and have a positive impact on their environment. The trees are planted internationally in areas where new vegetation is required.

## Your own well-being

During a grief process, it is important to take care of yourself. Try to get your rest, physical exercise and to eat properly. It can help to treat yourself each week to something special, such as dinner out with a close friend. Remember that friends and family are there to help you. Don't be afraid to ask.

## The grief process of children

As difficult as it is for you, the loss of a loved one may be even more difficult and frightening for children. Share your feelings of sadness and loss with children in the family. Their questions need to be answered honestly and their fears about the unknown must be addressed.

Encourage children to express their feelings. To give you a broad understanding of the different reactions, we have broken it down into age groups and the common characteristics of each;

**0-2 years** – While the child does not understand death itself, they can sense the feelings of grief and it is vitally important to maintain the consistency of care.

**3-4 years** – The child will not comprehend the “finality” of death. They may believe that the deceased will return at a later time.

**4-6 years** – Children of this age tend to associate the death of a person close to them with how it will affect their own life

personally. They may ask “who will take me to swimming lessons?” or “does that mean he/she won't be able to watch me play soccer this weekend?” It may need to be explained that the person isn't able to return and that death is permanent.

**7-10 years** – At this age, children are beginning to understand the permanency of death and may express an interest in the funeral service. They will probably ask more questions such as where a person goes after they've died.

**11 + years** – At this age, children will start to develop their own ideas and perspectives on what death means and what happens after death. They may explore different religious beliefs and opinions.

While this may give you a basic understanding of the characteristics associated with different ages, it is important to realise that these are simplified representations and each child should be managed and supervised individually.

# *the loss of a child*

“It’s not right that a parent should have to contemplate their child leaving this world before them. It doesn’t matter if that child is 3 or 33 - they are still your child, no matter their age.”

Losing a child is one of the worst experiences parents can ever face. So learning to understand their grief is just one step in helping them see brighter days.

Grieving the loss of a child can take on many forms. For many, grieving is an actual physical, mental and emotional process that can take years to process. For others, grief is more of an internal struggle that is rarely ever seen.

Bereaved parents often report that their greatest support came from spending time with other parents who have lost children.

Seek out a local support group – Compassionate Friends offers great and free assistance – phone counselling, a library and coffee evenings. [www.compassionatefriendswa.org.au](http://www.compassionatefriendswa.org.au)

Phone: **08 9486 8711**, country freecall: **1800 628 118**

Email: [info@compassionatefriendswa.org.au](mailto:info@compassionatefriendswa.org.au)

## **Commemorating your child’s life**

You can commemorate your child’s life in many ways. Some parents write poems or short stories, while others compose a journal of memories (their own and others) or create a garden nook where they can sit and reflect. You may like to gather some special possessions (clothing/toys) and place them in a Memory Box. Decorate the box with samples of their artwork or photographs.

Other parents remember their child’s birthday by buying a special gift at that time, wrapping it, choosing a card, later donating the gift to a charity. Your child’s memory can also be honoured in this way at Christmas-time.







# *the loss of your partner*

“When two become one. After years of being part of a couple, it can be really upsetting to be suddenly alone.”

## You may grieve for

- your future hopes, plans and dreams
- sharing everyday happenings with your loved one
- touch – touching and being touched
- your personal and private little stories and jokes
- belonging together and functioning as a couple

Don't stop seeing your married friends – just try changing the type of routine you share for a while. You could see a movie together rather than going out for dinner, for example. Try some group activities: ask a group of friends to share a picnic lunch at a park, followed by a bushwalk, or go bowling together.

## Grief of the elderly

The elderly face multiple losses as they age. Their grief is not just for their relationships, it's for all the things they lose along the way. Our elderly folk face so many fears and it can help us to help them if we understand what those fears are:

- not of dying itself, but rather the process of dying
- illness and pain
- being a burden, physically or financially
- being abandoned and alone
- “losing my mind”
- losing independence
- being forgotten

When we are faced with lots of significant losses, it can trigger within us the need to think about our own mortality. There may be some “anticipatory grief” – some will want to tie up loose ends; financial affairs and relationships. They may want to give things away.

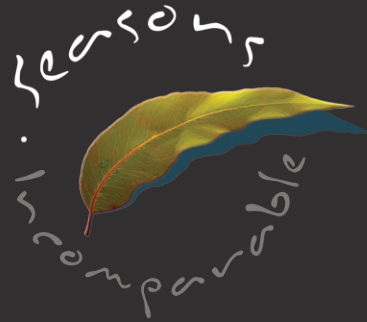
## Ways to help

- Share their memories. Look at photos with them, ask questions about the person who has died.
- Document the history. Show that they will not be forgotten.
- Arrange assistance via the various government and community facilities and organisations, such as in-home help and adult day-care etc. Although they may be initially resistant, it’s important to gently persevere so that a good outcome can be achieved for all.
- Delegate special things to certain people. That way they’ll feel happier to know that their things are being cared for and appreciated by someone.

If it becomes necessary for the elder to be re-homed into an aged care facility, be mindful that they are losing the familiar and comforting things that surround them – not just their home but also the neighborhood and the possessions they have treasured for many years.

Grieving over all these losses is normal, and sometimes the feelings of sadness will last for weeks or even months.





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