

STEPS TO USE IN A CRISIS

Pass around a roll and take notes
On students that might need more support.

Introduce Self

State facts /Dispel Rumors

Memories/descriptions of deceased

Have you had any previous experience with loss

Discuss coping strategies - what can you do to feel better

What beliefs do you and your family have to deal with death?

Ask each person in the group if they have an Adult to talk to when they go home.

See if they are ready to go back to class.

After someone has died - initial reactions

When someone close to you dies you may feel shock, disbelief, numbness, sadness, anger or loneliness. It may seem like everything has been turned upside down. Everyone reacts differently and it is normal to experience many emotions. It is all part of a grieving process. During this time it is important to take care of yourself.

Shock/disbelief

It is normal to feel a sense of shock when someone close to you has died. Experiencing shock can mean you have a physical and emotional reaction. You may feel dizzy, nauseous, dazed, numb or empty. As part of feeling shocked you may not believe that the news is real.

Shock may also mean that you feel nothing when you hear of the loss. This is normal and over time you are likely to start to feel different emotions. Shock is different for everyone and may last for a couple of days or weeks.

Shock may cause some people to react in an unusual way when they first hear the news of a death. It may be that some people laugh hysterically. This is often a result of the shock and not necessarily because they find the situation funny.

It is a good idea to take it easy. If you feel like things are building up on top of you may want to see your local doctor. To find a doctor or mental health professional see the beyondblue Directory of Medical and [Allied Health Practitioners in Mental Health](#).

Numbness/feeling nothing

As a way of coping with the news of a loss your feelings may become numb. This may mean you feel like you are dreaming, or the event seems unreal. Sometimes this can make it hard to cry or feel any sort of sadness. Over time you are likely to start feeling emotions.

Grief

As the shock and numbness lessens you are likely to start grieving. Everybody grieves differently and there are different things that may affect the way people grieve. Knowing these may help to understand yours and other people's reactions to the loss. If someone's reaction is different to yours it does not necessarily mean they care any less.

Some reasons why people grieve differently may be:

- The type of relationship they had with the person.

- Other losses they have had may come back and be grieved again with the new loss.
- **Gender** - Males and females may have different ways of managing their grief. Males are more likely to feel restrained and may need to show they are in control of their feelings. They are also more likely to be physically active in their grief. It is not uncommon for men to sort out practical problems or to be focusing on getting stuff done. Females are more likely to want to share their feelings with others. This may mean they talk about what is happening or cry more openly than males.
- **Cultural background** - Cultural groups express grief in different ways. The rituals and ceremonies, expressing emotions and the rules around what is considered respectful may vary depending on your cultural background. Crying and showing lots of emotion in public does not necessarily mean that someone is not coping with their grief, instead it may be their way of managing their grief.
- **Age** - Children of different ages understand death differently. Younger children may not understand that the person is not coming back. Older children, on the other hand, understand that the person is not coming back, but may not understand why.

Other effects you may experience after losing someone

- **Physical** - Headaches, feeling tired, achy muscles and nausea.
- **Emotional** - Sadness, anger, disbelief, despair, guilt, loneliness.
- **Mental** - Forgetfulness, lack of concentration, confusion, and poor memory.
- **Behavioural** - Changes to sleeping patterns, dreams or nightmares, changes in appetite, not wanting to go out or to

be around too many people, experiencing emotional reactions that are out of the ordinary, and crying.

- **Social** - Some friends may avoid you because they do not know what to say or how to help you.
- **Spiritual** - Your beliefs may be challenged.

It is normal to grieve after you have lost someone. Everybody should be able to grieve in their own way and time. Sometimes you may feel pressure to be strong for family or friends.

It is important to be supportive of others however you shouldn't feel like you have to bottle up what you feel.

For more information about the stages of grief you may want to check out the [Working through your grief](#) fact sheet.

Unexpected feelings and reactions

It is not unusual for events in your everyday routine to trigger a strong emotional reaction, as they are often a reminder that your friend or loved one is no longer with you. This may happen through something as simple as setting the table for a family meal or being reminded of the person you lost by the words of a song. Over time these reactions may not be as regular or as painful.