

Living with Grief



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COVER ILLUSTRATION

The butterfly image on the cover was chosen as a sign of hope. Butterflies are nature's reminder that moments of darkness and despair can be transformed into something beautiful.

Introduction

Grief is something many of us live with every day. This booklet is intended to help those who are grieving. It offers resources to help process and live with grief. As chaplains, we are available to support you now and as you continue your journey.

Grieving is the response to experiencing a loss and is a natural part of life. It can be sudden or gradual and often feel bewildering. Whether it is grieving for a physical death, a shift away from home, the breaking of a relationship or any other change in life, grief is common.



Common causes of Grief

Grieving can affect anyone and is most commonly associated with death. When a death occurs, many people are affected by the loss, although sometimes we may feel as if we are the only one grieving. Those directly affected may include the deceased's immediate family and relatives, friends and flatmates, workmates, teaching staff, medical care givers and others. At such times we all need support from each other.

This booklet outlines typical patterns and responses of grief and suggests coping strategies for yourself or the person you're journeying alongside. For a list of helpful contacts refer to page 14. A helpful online resource can also be found at <http://www.griefcentre.org.nz/>.

The Basic Patterns of Loss and Grief

Each of us will experience the journey in unique ways. However, there are basic components to the grief process which are often experienced. It is common to go through the whole process a number of times, or move backwards and forwards between the stages. These are some of the stages you may experience.

LOSS: There has been a loss or change in familiar pattern of behaviour, often due to the death of someone close to us.

SHOCK: The initial impact of the loss resulting in feelings of emotional and physical numbness.

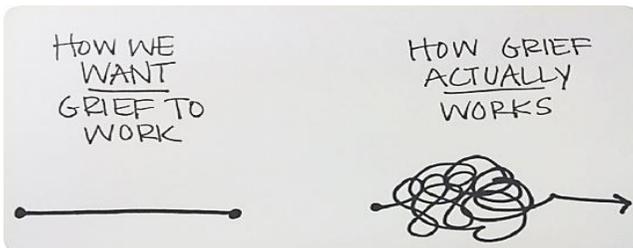
DENIAL: A state of disbelief of the reality faced. We may experience strange feelings, dissociation, vivid dreams or hallucinations, or imagining the loss never occurred.

ANGER and BLAME: The energy used to try to make sense of the loss. In the case of a death, these feelings may be directed at God, oneself, the person who died, medical staff, or friends and family.

DEEP SADNESS and PAIN: A deep aching sadness that can feel unbearable with no clear end in sight. This sadness can come in waves and be triggered by associations or events.

RECONSTRUCTION: A new perspective is emerging as the events and emotions are processed. While the sadness is still present, positive memories are able to exist alongside. A new life routine is developing.

ACCEPTANCE and HOPE: A gradual acceptance of a new way of living and considering future possibilities. Memories of before the loss are slowly integrated into a new routine and a new hope for the future is discovered.



Common Expressions of Grief

Grief is expressed in different ways, often exhibiting a range of emotions and behaviours:

- ✚ Feelings of guilt
- ✚ Weeping
- ✚ Becoming sad and withdrawn
- ✚ Venting anger
- ✚ Becoming irritable and moody
- ✚ Difficulty carrying out basic daily routines
- ✚ A change in eating habits
- ✚ Suddenly switching moods
- ✚ Feeling helpless
- ✚ Carrying on as if nothing has happened, burying feelings
- ✚ Losing control of behaviour or acting out of character
- ✚ Becoming obsessed with work or other activities
- ✚ Increasing our social life to escape the pain
- ✚ Using alcohol or drugs to dull the emotional pain



Grief causes a range of emotions; none of them are wrong to experience

Self-Care

Talking to someone you trust is often the best thing you can do for yourself even if it's the last thing you want to do.

Who can I talk to?

You can talk to anyone you trust sharing your experience with whether it's close friends, family members or colleagues. Some contact numbers for support services can be found on page 14.

How can I help myself?

Grief is a natural process. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. One person's grief will not look the same as another. It is important to allow yourself time and patience to discover what works for you.

Here are some suggestions as you process your grief:

- ✚ Write a poem or keep a journal about the experience expressing how you are feeling
- ✚ Put a special photo that represents the loss into a frame
- ✚ Write down precious memories of the time before the loss
- ✚ Visit a special place that you associate with the loss
- ✚ Write a letter saying goodbye
- ✚ Join a support group dealing with loss and grief. (contact the chaplains for information about such groups)
- ✚ Physical exercise
- ✚ Reestablish daily routines including social interactions
- ✚ Spend time with close friends/family that you trust
- ✚ Remember that you are experiencing a significant event. Be kind to yourself, and prioritise yourself



Remember to put your own 'oxygen mask' on first, before helping others

Helping others through their Grief

Recognising another person's pain and a willingness to listen and respond can assist them to deal with their grief. It is important to allow them space to express their loss in ways which will lead to healing and restoration.

There are certain practical things that can help when caring for someone who is experiencing grief. Create a safe space for listening, talking, crying, and spending time together. Often, someone grieving will appreciate kind gestures such as a meal, a personal gift, flowers, a card, or companionship to a social outing. Your willingness to just be present with the person is often a wonderful gift in itself, and often sufficient.

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Another person's grief will be much different than our own experiences or expectations. It's important that we allow others to grieve in their own comforting way, which honours their backgrounds, cultures and beliefs. In talking with the person, don't lose sight of the reason you're offering support – acknowledging the grief and experience will often be helpful.



For more information about coping with grief, contact:

Skylight: www.skylight.org.nz (supports people of all ages throughout NZ who are facing tough life situations, particularly grief, loss and trauma)

Suicide

If you have concerns for your own or someone else's immediate safety contact your local emergency department or call 111.

After a Suicide

A suicide death is sudden and particularly difficult to process. It not only affects family and close friends but can have a significant impact on others whether they knew the person well or not. People are left with difficult "why" questions that are often unanswered and a desire to piece together everything that happened. Feelings of guilt, blame and anger from "if only..." thoughts can be quite overwhelming.

Supporting Someone Grieved by Suicide

Finding support when grieved by suicide can be challenging due to the stigma associated with it. Important things you can do are simply just being there and being willing to discuss such matters with the person. While your presence and kōrero will not take the pain away it will provide assurance that they are not alone and you're not judging them.

Suicidal thoughts are not uncommon among those who are grieving from a suicide, which naturally puts them at higher risk for harming themselves. Have on hand resources and information for further help or offer to accompany them to visit their GP or another specialist.

Caring for Yourself

If you are grieving after a suicide it's important that you look after yourself. Grieving requires a great deal of energy and can affect your thoughts, bodies, and relationships. Being patient with yourself and nourishing and taking care of body and mind is important. Try not to push off asking for help. Reach out to friends or family and consider ongoing help and support from a GP, counsellor or a local mental health service.

For more information and support about suicide, contact:

Life Matters: www.lifematters.org.nz or lifemattersotago@gmail.com

(suicide prevention and bereavement support) AND/OR

After a Suicide: www.aftersuicide.nz (practical information and guidance if someone you love or care about has died by suicide)

Religious Perspectives

Grief inevitably asks the question, “Why?” For many, the deepest wisdom we can bring to that question is provided by religious faith traditions. Death is a mystery with varying views and traditions among religions.

Despite these differing views, suggestions of ways to *respond* to death among religious traditions are relatively common. Rituals and ceremonies associated with death are encouraged as a way to help those left behind to respect and honour the deceased. Drawing together with other mourners allows them to receive support and express their personal sorrow. This affirms the continuing meaning and value of life in the face of death.

Christians believe in resurrection after death; that after death the soul of the person may be given a new spiritual body and enjoy eternal life with God. This idea is based on the life, teaching and resurrection of Jesus Christ. However, there is great diversity of understanding regarding the specific nature of the afterlife within Christian denominations.



The cross is a source of strength for many Christians

Some faiths, including Hinduism and Buddhism, hold a “cyclical” view of life, believing that the soul may survive death and return many times to this world as a different creature.

There are other religious traditions which share the belief that the soul survives death. For a Jewish or Muslim person a good life on earth is rewarded with the blessedness of heaven in the presence of God.

Some traditions believe that there is no God and no life after death. Death is simply the end of existence.

In many cultural traditions, such as Māori and other Polynesian peoples, it is believed that the dead are always present. Their memory is evoked on formal occasions, and every such occasion contains elements of mourning and remembering the departed ones. There are a wide range of beliefs about life after death held by people of different faiths and cultures in NZ. A good resource is located at <http://www.amemorytree.co.nz/customs.php>

He Whakaaro Māori (Māori Considerations)

Ngā manaakitanga o Te Atua nui ki a koutou ngā uri o ngā tūpuna o mua. Tēnei te mihi e ngā taurira o ngā whare wānanga o Ōtepoti.

Blessings from God to you, the descendants of those who have gone before. Greetings to the students of our tertiary institutions in Dunedin.

Anei he kupu kōrero mai i ngā tūpuna: E hoki ki tōu maunga kia pūrea ai koe e ngā hau a Tāwhirimātea. Anei anō he pānui mai i tētahi waiata a Rāwiri i te Paipera Tapu: He tau iho te tangi i te ahiahi, ā, i te ata he hari.

Embedded in our culture are words of wisdom; Return to your mountain and be cleansed by the winds of Tāwhirimātea. Psalm 30:5 offers these words of wisdom; Tears may flow in the night, but joy comes in the morning.



I ngā wā o te pouri kimihia o taituarā hei awhina i a koe. Kei ngā whare wānanga he Kaumātua, he Kaitohutohu me te Amorangi hei manaaki, hei awhina hei tautoko.

An important concept in our culture is taituarā, identifying your support people and structures. While you maybe away from the comforts of home, we offer at our tertiary institutions many support people including kaumātua, Māori counsellors and a Māori chaplain.

Roimata (pictured above) means "tear drop" and is a symbol of sadness, so would be given as a gesture of recognition of a person's sadness or loss, and a reassurance that you will stand beside them. Sometimes referred to as the comfort stone.

Anei ētahi o ngā kupu o tētahi waiata hei whakakapi taku korero:

The song Kahikatea expresses the sentiment of strength in unity:

E tū Kahikatea, *Stand strong like the Kahikatea tree,*

Hei whakapae ururoa *To brave the storms*

Awhi mai, awhi atu, *Being supported and supporting others,*

Tātou tātou e *All of us together*

Support for Staff

The unexpected death of a student or staff member, or a death after prolonged illness, is a shock and a hurt that has to be processed. Regular work and classes continue while people adjust to the loss. Sometimes a loss can also trigger older and different griefs. So how do we cope?

Regardless of the relationship with the deceased we all need support. There are support services for staff which includes Chaplains and the free counselling through the employment assistance programmes (see page 14). Reaching out to family and friends is also encouraged.

The University of Otago and Otago Polytechnic have critical response plans for helping deal with a death. For detailed information refer to the links below.

The University of Otago:

<https://www.otago.ac.nz/administration/policies/otago045265.html>

Otago Polytechnic:

<https://www.op.ac.nz/about-us/governance-and-management/policies/>

Chaplains or HODs can assist in planning a special ceremony or commemoration to help staff and students remember the deceased:

- ✚ A memorial service can be beneficial as not everyone may have had the opportunity to attend the funeral. Staff and students can have the opportunity to share memories in a familiar environment.
- ✚ A symbolic action, such as planting a tree or displaying a plaque of remembrance, can give staff and students a source of strength and feeling of connection at a location on campus.
- ✚ A display of creative responses to a death such as photographs, poems, paintings, a short description of the life of the deceased, could be mounted in a meaningful location for a time.

Selected Poems and Readings

LOVE MANTRA FOR LETTING GO

i bless you
i release you
i set you free
i set myself free
i let you be
i let myself be

Alla Renee Bozarth

WE REMEMBER THEM

In the rising of the sun and in its going down,
we remember them.
In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter,
we remember them.
In the opening of buds and in the rebirth of spring,
we remember them.
In the blue of the sky and in the warmth of summer,
we remember them.
In the rustling of leaves and in the beauty of autumn,
we remember them.
In the beginning of the year and when it ends,
we remember them.
When we are weary and in need of strength,
we remember them.
When we are lost and sick at heart,
we remember them.
When we have joys we yearn to share,
we remember them.
So long as we live, they too shall live, for they are now a part of us,
as we remember them.



Rabbi Sylvan Kamens and Rabbi Jack Riemer

WHAKATAUKI

He aha te mea nui o te ao?
He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata

(What is the most important thing in the world?
It is people, it is people, it is people)

Maori Proverb

PRAYER AT A FUNERAL

God who brought us to birth, and in whose arms we die, in our grief and shock contain and comfort us; embrace us with your love,

Give us hope in our confusion, and grace to let go into new life, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hannah Ward, Jennifer Wild and Janet Morley

ECCLESIASTES 3: 1-3

There is a season for everything:
A time for giving birth,
A time for dying;
A time for tears,
A time for laughter,
A time for mourning,
A time for dancing



The Holy Bible

ROMANS 8:38-39

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Holy Bible

Commemorative Registers

In 1980 the **University of Otago** established a register to record memorial and commemorative features of the university campus. These features include memorial trees, plaques, seats, a bridge and a walk to commemorate the university members who served in World War One.

There are six copies of the commemorative and memorial register on campus, including at the Central, Hocken and Science Libraries.

The University of Otago commemorative register brochure containing information about the location – and photos – of the various memorials can be accessed online via:

<https://www.otago.ac.nz/propertyservices/commemorative-register/index.html>

In 2016, **Otago Polytechnic** established a register to record memorial and commemorative features on the Otago Polytechnic Forth Street Campus. Across the campus are memorial trees, plaques, and artworks commemorating staff and students of the Polytechnic.

The commemorative register is available online via:

<https://www.op.ac.nz/about-us/memorial-site-homepage>



A branch from a memorial cherry tree at the University of Otago

Encouragement from the Bible

(From Matthew 5:4, Jesus speaking)

English: God blesses those people who grieve. They will find comfort

Chewa (Zambia): Mulungu adalisa onse olila, ndipo apeza chintontozo. igbo
(Nigeria): Ngozi diri ndi na eri uju maka na aga agba ha ume

Cook Island Maori: E ao to tei aue: e tārekareka'ia ratou

Filipino (Tagalog): Mapapalad ang nangahahapis: sapagka't sila'y aaliwin

French: Heureux ceux qui souffrent car ils seront soulagés

German: Selig sind, die da Leid tragen; denn sie sollen getröstet werden

Hindi: धन्य हैं वे जो शोक करते हैं, क्योंकि परमेश्वर उन्हें सांतवन देता है

Japanese: 悲しむ者は幸いです。その人は慰められるからです

Korean: 애통하는 자는 복이 있나니, 저희가 위로를 받을 것임이요.

Mandarin: 哀慟的人有福了，因為他們必得安慰

Maori: Ka koa te hunga e tangi ana: ka whakamarietia hoki rātou

Niuean: Uhoaki a lautolu ne fakatutuku: ha ko e mena ke fakamafanatia a lautolu

Samoan: Amuia e faanoanoa; aua e faamafanafanaina i latou

Shona: Vakakomborerwa zvavo vanochema, Mwari achavanyaradza

Spanish: Bienaventurados los que lloran porque ellos recibirán consolación

Swahili: Mungu huwabariki wenye uzuni. Maana hao Watafarijika

Tongan: Monu'ia 'a kinautolu 'oku tangi he te nau ma'u 'a e fiemalie

Support Contacts

Need 2 Talk (Available 24/7, for all ages)

<https://1737.org.nz>

Ring or Text 1737 to speak to or text a trained counsellor

Otago Polytechnic Chaplaincy

<https://studentservices.op.ac.nz/home/student-success> & chaplain@op.ac.nz

Contact Student Success, (03) 479 3743, ask for a chaplain

Otago Polytechnic Staff Assistance Programme

<https://www.op.ac.nz/hub/teams/people-performance-and-development/people-and-culture/safety-and-wellbeing> or email safetyandwellbeing@op.ac.nz

Otago Polytechnic Student Health and Counselling

<https://www.op.ac.nz/students/support/tile?id=3344>

(03) 479 6082

Otago Polytechnic Te Punaka Ōwheo (Māori Support Centre)

<https://www.op.ac.nz/students/maori-students/> & tepunakaowheo@op.ac.nz

University of Otago Chaplaincy

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/chaplain> & chaplains@otago.ac.nz

Ecumenical Chaplains (03) 479 8497 or Catholic Chaplains (03) 479 5438

University of Otago EAP (Employment Assistance Programme for Staff)

<http://www.stratos-ltd.co.nz/index.php>

University of Otago Māori Centre (includes a counselling service)

<https://www.otago.ac.nz/maoricentre> & maoricentre@otago.ac.nz

(03) 479 8490

University of Otago Student Health and Counselling

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/studenthealth>

(03) 479 8212

Victim support

www.victimsupport.org.nz & nationaloffice@victimsupport.org.nz

C/- Dunedin Police Station (03) 471 4926

For an electronic copy of this booklet, visit:

<https://www.otago.ac.nz/chaplain/resources/chaplainspublications.html>

***Please contact our University of Otago &
Otago Polytechnic Chaplaincy teams:***

University of Otago

www.otago.ac.nz/chaplain
chaplains@otago.ac.nz

Otago Polytechnic

www.otago.ac.nz/chaplain
chaplain@op.ac.nz

Muslim Chaplaincy

muslimchaplaincy@otago.ac.nz





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www.otago.ac.nz/chaplain