

## Thorak Regional Cemetery Chapel & Crematorium

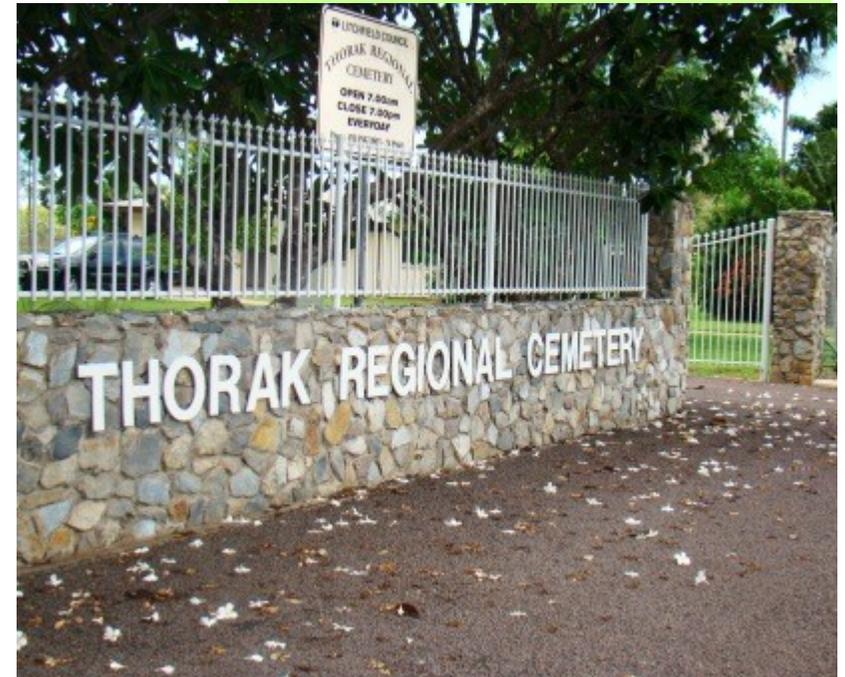


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## Thorak Regional Cemetery Chapel and Crematorium



Helpful Information for  
Coping with Grief

# Coping with Grief and Loss

## Understanding the Grieving Process

Losing someone or something you love or care deeply about is very painful. You may experience all kinds of difficult emotions and it may feel like the pain and sadness your experiencing will never let up. These are normal reactions to a significant loss. But while there is no right or wrong way to grieve, there are healthy ways to cope with the pain that, in time, can renew you and permit you to move on.

## What is Grief?

Grief is a natural response to loss. It's the emotional suffering you feel when something or someone you love is taken away. The more significant the loss, the more intense the grief.

## Everyone grieves differently

Grieving is a personal and highly individual experience. How you grieve depends on many factors, including your personality and coping style, your life experience, your faith, and the nature of the loss. The grieving process takes time. Healing happens gradually; it can't be forced or hurried, and there is no "normal" timetable for grieving. Some people start to feel better in weeks or months. For others, the grieving process is measured in years. Whatever your grief experience, it's important to be patient with yourself and allows the process to naturally unfold.

## The Five Stages of Grief

- **Denial** "This can't be happening to me"
- **Anger** "Why is this happening to me"
- **Bargaining** "Make this not happen , and in return I will ...."
- **Depression** "I'm too sad to do anything"
- **Acceptance** "I'm at peace with what happened"

If you are experiencing any of these emotions following a loss, it may help to know that your reaction is natural and that you'll heal in time. However,

## Practical Arrangements

After a death there a lot of practical arrangements that need to be made. These will focus on two major areas, organising the burial or cremation of the deceased and organising family affairs or everyday matters.

Your funeral director or religious organisation can advise and assist you in caring for the deceased. They will help you with all of the formalities and documentation required. These arrangements will be made soon after the death and you may be confused or in shock. At this time, seek support from family and friends.

In the longer term, often continuing many months after the death, there are other everyday practical issues. These include dealing with the will, finances, Centrelink and other official bodies, filling in forms and lodging documentation. If you do not feel able to deal with these issues, again seek help from family and friends. There are also professional people in the community who specialise in providing assistance (eg financial advisor, bank manager).

In addition there are many useful books available on coming to terms with your loss. Your local library will have books on loss and grief or alternatively check your local book store or internet.

Just remember, life goes on, and you still have life to live, you will experience joy and love and happiness again, and you will always have your memories to look back upon . Remember your lost one and smile.





**It is very tempting to want to 'hate' grief, to see it as the enemy, the unwelcome guest. Instead, try opening yourself to grief . . . ask it what it has to teach you. Ask it what it is training you to do, to be. Ask this uninvited teacher into your life and notice how things begin to shift. Remember that grief never asks you to let go of love.**

*-- Ashley Davis Prend*

**Grief is neither an illness nor a pathological condition, but rather a highly personal and normal response to life-changing events, a natural process that can lead to healing and personal growth. The transition through this difficult time is the courageous journey.**



**Grief comes in one size, Extra Large. If we tuck it away in the bottom drawer where it never sees the light of day, it remains exactly the same. On the other hand, if we wear it, feel it, talk about it, and share it with others, it is likely that it will become faded, shrunk and worn, or will simply no longer fit. When grief has served its purpose, we are able to recognize the many gifts we have gained.**

not everyone who is grieving goes through all of these stages, and that's okay. You do not have to go through each stage in order to heal. In fact, some people resolve their grief without going through any of these stages. Remember, there is no "normal" timetable for grieving, so don't worry about what you "should" be feeling or which stage you're supposed to be in. Our grief is as individual as our lives.

## **Common Symptoms of Grief**

While loss affects people in different ways, many people experience the following symptoms when they're grieving. Just remember that almost anything you experience in the early stages of grief is normal—including feeling like you're going crazy, feeling like you're in a bad dream, or questioning your religious beliefs.

- **Shock and Disbelief**—Right after a loss, it can be hard to accept what happened. You may feel numb, have trouble believing that the loss really happened, or even deny the truth. If someone you love has died, you may keep expecting them to show up, even though you know they're gone.
- **Sadness**—Profound sadness is probably the most universally experienced symptom of grief. You may have feelings of emptiness, despair, yearning, or deep loneliness. You may also cry and feel emotionally unstable.
- **Guilt**—You may regret or feel guilty about things you did or didn't say or do. You may also feel guilty about certain feelings (eg feeling relieved when the person died after a long, difficult illness). After a death you may even feel guilty for not doing something to prevent the death, even if there was nothing you could have done.
- **Anger**—Even if the loss was nobody's fault, you may feel angry and resentful. If you lost a loved one, you may be angry at yourself, God, the doctor's, or even the person who died for abandoning you. You may feel the need to blame someone for the injustice that was done to you.



- **Fear**—A significant loss can trigger a host of worried and fears. You may feel anxious, helpless, or insecure. You may even have panic attacks. The death of a loved one can trigger fears about your own mortality, or facing life without that person, or the responsibilities you now face alone.
- **Physical Symptoms**—We often think of grief as a strictly emotional process, but often grief involves physical problems, including fatigue, nausea, lowered immunity, weight loss or weight gain, aches and pains and insomnia.

## Coping with Grief

### Get Support

The single most important factor in healing from loss is having the support of other people. Sharing your loss makes the burden of grief easier to carry. Wherever the support comes from, accept it and do not grieve alone. If you follow a religion, draw comfort from your faith and from members of your religious community. Join a support group, sharing your sorrow with others who have experienced similar losses can help. If your grief feels like too much to bear, seek help with an experienced health professional with experience in grief counselling.

### Take care of yourself

Face your feelings. In order to heal you have to acknowledge the pain. Write about your loss in a journal, write a letter saying the things you never got to say, make a scrapbook or photo album celebrating the person's life. Look after your physical health. The mind and body are connected so when you feel good physically, you'll also feel better emotionally. Combat stress and fatigue by getting enough sleep, eating right and exercising. Don't use alcohol or drugs to numb the pain or grief or lift your mood artificially. Don't let anyone tell you how to feel, your grief is your own and no one can tell you when it's time to "move on" or "get over it". Let yourself feel whatever you feel without embarrassment of judgement, it's okay to be angry, it's ok to laugh and it's ok to cry.



### When grief doesn't go away

It's normal to feel sad and numb, or angry following a loss. But as time passes, these emotions should become less intense as you accept the loss and start to move forward. If you aren't feeling better over time, or your grief is getting worse, it may be a sign that your grief has developed into a more serious problem, such as complicated grief or major depression. In these instances, you need to talk to a mental health professional right away. Left untreated, complicated grief or depression can lead to significant emotional damage, life threatening health problems, and even suicide. But treatment can you make better.

*"There are things that we don't want to happen but have to accept, things we don't want to know but have to learn, and people we can't live without but have to let go."*

### Myths and Facts about Grief

#### **Myth: The pain will go away faster if you ignore it**

**Fact:** Trying to ignore your pain or keep it from surfacing will only make it worse in the long run. For real healing it is necessary to face your grief and actively deal with it.

#### **Myth: It's important to "be strong" in the face of loss.**

**Fact:** Feeling sad, frightened, or lonely is a normal reaction to loss. Crying doesn't mean you are weak. You don't need to "protect" your family or friends by putting up a brave front. Showing your true feelings can help them and you.

#### **Myth: If you don't cry, it means you aren't sorry about the loss.**

**Fact:** Crying is a normal response to sadness, but it's not the only one. Those who don't cry may feel the pain just as deeply as others. They may simply have other ways of showing it.

#### **Myth: Grief should last about a year**

**Fact:** There is no right and wrong time frame for grieving, How long it takes can differ from person to person