

Grief after the loss of a loved one – a family member or friend

For people who have had a family member or friend injured or killed in this tragedy, the thoughts and good wishes of all Kiwis are with you at this time.

You will likely be experiencing a mix of trauma yourself, plus grief. Trauma and grief are different, but together can mean a mix of complex thoughts and feelings. It is common to find yourself having persistent thoughts such as “why did this terrible thing happen?”, “why was this not prevented?”, “what did my loved one suffer?”, and “what is the meaning or purpose of this tragedy?”. You may find yourself questioning your faith.

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It is also common to feel a range of changing emotions from numbness and a feeling of unreality, to anger, to grief and sadness, to hopelessness. You may feel guilt that you survived and your loved one did not, or blame yourself for having not been able to protect your loved one. You may find yourself struggling to sleep, withdrawing from others, and you are likely to also experience a range of physical symptoms. Feeling a weight in your chest – literally a “breaking heart” – is a very common symptom of grief.

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Coping after a traumatic death is difficult for everyone. The general advice above will be helpful. We know that support from others is critical, so take time out when you need it, but make sure reach out especially to those family and friends who have not lost a loved one, and accept offers of help and support.

Grieving is a process that unfolds over a number of months and sometimes years, but with time it does get easier. It is important to remember it is a very individual process – we all go through it at some times of our lives, but how grief affects us is very individual.

Staying active in your faith, whatever that may be, and prayer, are helpful and protective – even if you do find yourself questioning your faith – “Why did this happen?”

For support with grief, anxiety, distress or mental wellbeing, you can call or text 1737 – free, anytime, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week - to talk it through with a trained counsellor.



New Zealand Government