



Burke Ward Public School

BROKEN HILL NSW 2880
Phone: (08) 8088 4700
ASIS: 18 246 198 266

PO Box 678
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ABN: 18 246 198 266

Monday, 28th October 2019

Dear Parents,

Some students at BWPS school may need extra support, particularly as we approach the end of year and after several traumatic incidents within our community. For some students this will be an ongoing need.

Some key messages for your children

Two important messages to promote are that all of us should seek help from others when we feel down or vulnerable and that young people should tell an adult if they are worried about a friend or themselves. Our school will be concentrating on supporting our students and staff over the next months. This means, among other things, returning the school to normal routines as soon as possible and recognising that students can be affected by traumatic events for many months to come.

Staying connected and engaged with your child is one of the best ways to support them. The following website can help you to do this:

<https://headspace.org.au/assets/Uploads/Resource-library/Family-and-friends/Information-for-parents-and-carers-FAF-web.pdf>

Social Media

Sometimes after a traumatic event, things can be posted on social media that may be upsetting for students and their families. If you or your child notices any concerning content, please contact the school.

Contacting the school with further inquiries or to raise concerns about your child or another student.

If you have further inquiries or wish to raise concerns about your child or another student please contact **Kristie Pascoe or Karen Canning** who are the nominated contacts for inquiries from parents rather than approaching other members of staff.

We ask this as it is important to ensure that you receive consistent and accurate information and for us to be aware of all parent concerns.

Contacting the school counsellor

Please feel free to contact our school counsellor, **Mia Lawrence** on 8088 4700 for further information or if you have any concerns about your child. If your child is already using the services of a mental health professional, you should ensure this information is passed on to that professional.

Respect, Responsibility, Honesty

Email: burkeward-p.school@det.nsw.edu.au

Some additional sources of support/information

It is important to find someone students trust and feel comfortable with. If they have had a positive experience with a GP or counsellor in the past, encourage them to see that person again. You could also contact their local community health centre (CAMHS) 8082 6111, Headspace (12-25 years) (02) 9393 9699 or CatholicCare 8087 3477 or Mission Australia 8087 2518. The school learning support team can also help with referrals to these services.

Potential sources of free, anonymous and confidential support for yourself or your children include:

- Kids Helpline (1800 551800 or www.kidshelp.com.au - 24 hours access)
- Lifeline (131114 or www.lifeline.org.au - 24hour access)
- ParentLine 1300 1300 52
- <https://raisingchildren.net.au/for-professionals/mental-health-resources/abuse-trauma-violence-and-grief/grief>
- Headspace (1800 650 890 or www.eheadspace.org.au) or visit www.headspace.org.au
- You or your child may also care to contact the State Mental Health Telephone Access Line (1800 011 511) which operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It is staffed by clinicians who can provide advice, make referrals and link callers to the mental health service in their Local Health District.

Other resources:

- Information for young person regarding responses to grief:
(<https://headspace.org.au/assets/Uploads/Resource-library/Young-people/Grief-web.pdf>)
- Information for young person regarding responses to a trauma:
(<https://headspace.org.au/assets/Uploads/Trauma-web.pdf>)
- Information/ resources for parents of younger children:
<https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/grief/>

Mia Lawrence
School Counsellor

Karen Canning
Principal

Respect, Responsibility, Honesty

Email: burkeward-p.school@det.nsw.edu.au

**For more information
or to contact a
NALAG Centre or Branch
near you please contact**

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www.nalag.org.au

Telephone Grief Support Line
02 9489 6644
(call costs will apply)

Helping someone who is grieving...

Be a good listener

Grieving people need to talk about their loss, acknowledge that they have been through a difficult experience. You can't fix their grief but you can be there, hear their story, and share their journey.

Be a shoulder to cry on

Allow them to cry with you, crying helps the release of emotions and this helps with healing.

Be in touch with them

Drop in, call on the telephone and say "I was thinking of you today" write a letter, send an email, remember special days like Christmas, birthdays and anniversaries.

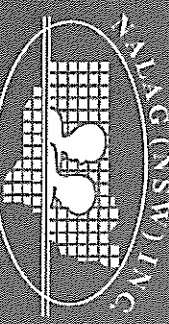
When someone has experienced a loss, there will be big and small adjustments to be made in their lives. These could bring uncertainty, frustration, fear, sadness and change as each new day comes along. Grief is about adapting to change in life, thoughts, hopes, beliefs and the future.

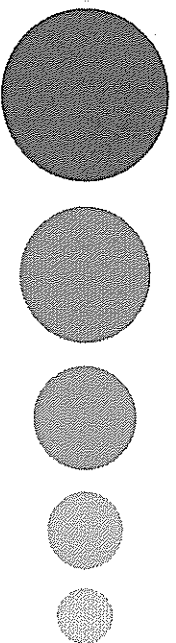
Be a friend

Often being there is all that is needed to support someone who is grieving.

(Adapted from the writings of Doris Zagdanski)

**Helping Children
After Loss**





Helping children after a loss

A death in the family

We may be numb with shock, overwhelmed with sadness, physically overcome by our grief. And then there are the children...

Children sense the emotion around them, react to body language and overhear conversations. We want to protect children but it is not helpful to exclude or isolate them by not talking about the death. Children's fantasies can be much worse than reality....

Though children may seem to be uncaring, they are sometimes very sad. Sometimes there are physical reactions such as reverting to thumb-sucking, bed-wetting, and clinging to parents; headaches, stomach aches, rashes and changes in appetite and sleep patterns.

"Telling the children" is not easy. But it is helpful to talk about the person who has died and to talk about what the children are feeling.

The child's response is different from an adult's...

Though children have the same sorts of feelings as adults, they show them differently.

Children often express their feelings through their behaviour, play and even drawings. Adults should not be alarmed if children play at dying or death. They may talk to their toys about their sadness. This is a way for them to make meaning out of what has happened.

When grief is acted out in bad behaviour, giving firm non-punitive disciplinary guidelines can support the child through the chaos of emotion.

Children absorb concepts about grief very slowly and a little at a time. It is normal for a child to be sad for a little while, then go outside and happily play. They may ask questions over and over, even for weeks and months, or they may hide their feelings to protect loved adults from more pain.

A bereavement can bring up the basic fear of abandonment. Reassure the child that you will be there.

Talking about death eases a child's fears. Otherwise the child learns that death is a taboo, mysterious and fearful subject.

Adapted from Hughes, M. (1995)
Bereavement and Support
Taylor Francis: Washington D.C.

Talking to the child about death...

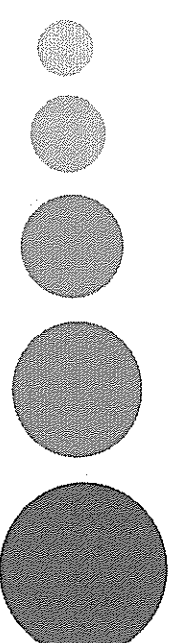
- Give clear, simple, truthful information in words the child can understand. Say "dead", "died". Not "gone", "lost", "sleeping".
- Be prepared to repeat information many times.
- Don't give long explanations. Give the facts. Wait for questions and answer them. Don't make up answers.
- Find out what the child is thinking. Ask what the child has heard.
- Talk about your feelings. Make sure the child knows your sad feelings are not his/her fault.
- Reassure the child he/she will be looked after.
- Talk about the person who has died. Talk about the good and the bad memories.
- Talk about the death and what will happen at the funeral.
- Let the child attend the funeral if she/ he wants to.

- Make sure the child knows death is not a punishment and is not contagious.
- A hug is always nice!

Helping the child through grief...

- Get back a regular household routine as soon as possible.
- Let the child know he/she is safe and protected.
- Try to understand the child's behaviour. Sometimes he/she does not have the words to express grief.
- Involve the child in a ceremony to say goodbye.
- Talk about bad dreams.
- Let the child help you in an age appropriate way.
- Look together at photos of the person who has died.
- Give the child a memento of the person who has died.
- Let the school know about the death.
- Don't lean on the child for comfort and support.
- Let the child stay a child.

These suggestions also apply to grief experienced after divorce, death of a pet, moving house / school, losses after bushfires, storms etc.



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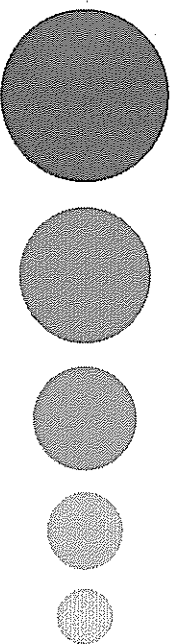
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Sudden or Unexpected Death

Grief reactions associated with
sudden or unexpected death



Grief Reactions Associated with Sudden or Unexpected Death

What is meant by sudden and unexpected death?

Most people will have an idea about what a sudden, unexpected death is. But it is very important that this is thought about from the point of view of those affected. For example, even if someone has been terminally ill and receiving long term care, their death may still occur in a way that seems sudden and unexpected to their carers.

A sudden, unexpected death can raise some complex issues for the bereaved person. For many, because sudden, unexpected deaths are the sort of deaths more often linked with more traumatic ways of dying. A sudden death can catch people out and test what resources they have on hand for coping.

People may be:-

- shocked
- confused initially
- have a need to go over and over the events around the death
- Feel guilty or angry. If the death resulted from an accident it can mean mistakes were made.
- Shame and guilt arise for family that have lost a loved one to suicide.

Self Care

Self care is important to prevent further stress to the body. The following have been found to be helpful in coping with grief:

- A regular daily routine. Have set times for getting up, meals and going to bed.
- A balanced diet. Include: breads and cereals; meat, fish and dairy products; fruit and vegetables.
- Avoid too much coffee and tea to help you sleep at night.
- Outdoor activities, such as going for a walk or gardening take you away from the stress, and refresh you mentally.
- Exercise, such as swimming, walking and team games, will produce chemicals called endorphins in the body which help to counteract depression and make you feel good. The exercise does not need to be strenuous. If you have doubts about your fitness consult your doctor.
- Relaxation: meditation, massage, music.
- A relaxing pre-sleep routine: winding down before bed and not watching television.
- Avoiding seeking relief through alcohol, smoking, medication and other drugs
- Consulting the doctor about physical symptoms, for a blood pressure check, for practical help, for medical certificates, and for help with the grief.

No time for Goodbyes

When a sudden or unexpected death occurs what is often most difficult for the bereaved is that there was **no time for goodbyes**. Grief can become complicated or unresolved until some way is found for people to say their goodbyes.

How can I say goodbye?

Besides the funeral, there are other ways in which family of loved ones can say their goodbyes and remember their loved ones:

- Plant a tree and have a ceremony dedicating it to your loved one, a continuing and growing memory of your loved one. Choose a place to plant the tree that you can visit as regularly as you would like to reflect.
- Write a letter to your loved one, keep it in a safe place, bury it or burn it.
- Write a poem for your loved one.

Adapted from Grief Link resources website:
www.grieflink.asn.au

