



## Advice on Grief and Loss

The grief and mourning experience following the death of someone important to you can be one of the most painful experiences you'll ever have to endure and can feel overwhelming.

You may experience waves of intense and very difficult emotions, ranging from profound sadness, emptiness and despair, to shock, numbness, guilt, or regret. You might rage at the circumstances, and you may even find it difficult to accept the person is really gone, or struggle to see how you can ever recover and move on from this loss.

This process of grieving isn't limited to emotional responses, either. Grief can also trigger physical reactions, including weight and appetite changes, difficulty sleeping, aches and pains.

The level of support you have around you, your personality, and your own levels of health and well-being can all play a role in how grief impacts you.

But no matter how much pain you're in right now, it's important to know that there are healthy ways to cope with the anguish and come to terms with your grief.

### As Parents

Below are really two very valuable links to information and tools for how we as parents can respond to our children's grief.

Some of the key points include;

1. Explain that grief is **different** for everyone and takes time to get through.
2. **Set up opportunities to Listen and Validate:** Encourage your child to express their feelings and listen without judgment. Help name and validate their emotions by acknowledging that it's okay to feel sad, angry, or confused etc.
3. **Provide Comfort:** Offer physical comfort like hugs and be present. Sometimes, just being there is enough.
4. Its Ok to **ask questions** about worries or concerns they might have about their own death, or the death of others close to them. Be open to exploring bigger life questions around death, dying, loss and grief you child/teen.
5. Be **mindful of any changes** in your child and seek help without delay if they are not their usual self.
6. Maintain typical **routine** as much possible, including keeping activity and engaging in activities that bring joy

If you are concerned about you child and want help from school, please email Head of Guidance, Tom Matthews [TMA@stac.school.nz](mailto:TMA@stac.school.nz) or contact your child's Dean or Preparatory School class teacher. If we connect in this way it will help to normalise seeking support.



## How to deal with the grieving process

While grieving a loss is an inevitable part of life, there are ways to help cope with the pain, come to terms with your grief, and eventually, find a way to pick up the pieces and move on with your life.

- acknowledge your pain;
- accept that grief can trigger many different and unexpected emotions;
- understand that your grieving process will be unique to you;
- support yourself emotionally by taking care of yourself physically;
- seek out face-to-face support from people who care about you.

Seek out trusted adults you can speak with at St Andrew's College, it's okay not to have all your words and thoughts sorted out yet, it takes time. Students can make an appointment directly with the counsellors via their team tutor page.

While loss affects people in different ways, there are patterns of emotions and responses that occur, such as:

- **Shock and disbelief** – Straight after a loss, like when someone passes away, it can be hard to accept what happened. You may not believe what you are hearing and expect the person to turn up at any moment.
- **Sadness** – Complete sadness, emptiness or loneliness are what most people describe when they talk about their experience of grief. You may cry a lot or feel emotionally unstable, or you may not cry at all and feel numb.
- **Guilt** – You may feel terribly guilty about things you did or didn't say or do, or about how you are feeling.
- **Anger** – Even if the loss was nobody's fault, you may feel angry and have a desire to blame someone for what has happened – yourself, others, or even the person who died.
- **Fear** – After a significant loss, you may feel anxious, scared, helpless, or insecure. If you have lost a loved one, or close friend and you may worry about how you can manage on your own without them.
- **Physical symptoms** – We often think of grief as an emotional process, but it can contribute to physical problems, including fatigue, nausea, weight loss or weight gain, aches and pains, or sleep changes (sleeping less or more than usual).

### Book reference:

Word of Comfort, by Rebekah Ballagh (great for younger students)

*Being a True Hero: Understanding & Preventing Suicide in Your Community* by Michael Hempseed.

<https://www.beingtruehero.com>

The book is reviewed by Dr Sue Bagshaw, a local specialist youth mental health doctor who established 298 Youth Health, renamed 'Ta Tahī Youth' designed to help young people aged 10 to 24 and their families. Read more on Te Tahī Youth's website [by clicking here](#).



### Support contacts available to you outside of St Andrew's College

- Need to talk? Free call or text [1737](tel:1737) any time for support from a trained counsellor.
- [Lifeline](tel:0800543354) – 0800 543 354 (0800 LIFELINE) or free text 4357 (HELP).
- [Youthline](tel:0800376633) – 0800 376 633, free text 234 or email [talk@youthline.co.nz](mailto:talk@youthline.co.nz) or online chat.
- [Samaritans](tel:0800726666) – 0800 726 666
- [Suicide Crisis Helpline](tel:0508828865) – 0508 828 865 (0508 TAUTOKO).
- [Healthline](tel:0800611116) – 0800 611 116
- [thelowdown.co.nz](http://thelowdown.co.nz) – or email [team@thelowdown.co.nz](mailto:team@thelowdown.co.nz) or free text 5626.
- [What's Up](tel:08009428787) – 0800 942 8787 (for 5–18-year-olds). Phone counselling is available every day of the week, 365 days of the year, 11.00am–11.00pm. Online chat is available from 11.00am–10.30pm 7 days a week, including all public holidays.
- [Skylight](tel:0800299100) – 0800 299 100 for support through trauma, loss and grief from 9.00am–5.00pm weekdays.