

REACHING OUT

Grieving can feel pretty overwhelming at times. You may need to reach out for a bit (or a lot) of help. It's not a sign of weakness to need some help - it's normal to need help at these times.

Most of us get help from our families and friends, but remember, special help is also available from religious ministers, health workers, counsellors and doctors.

If you want some help, or just to talk things through a bit, you can contact your local Aboriginal health worker, priest, doctor or community service for assistance.

Contact Information:-

- Murray Mallee Community Health Centre,
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This brochure was originally produced by
The Rainbow Project - Helping with Grief and Trauma

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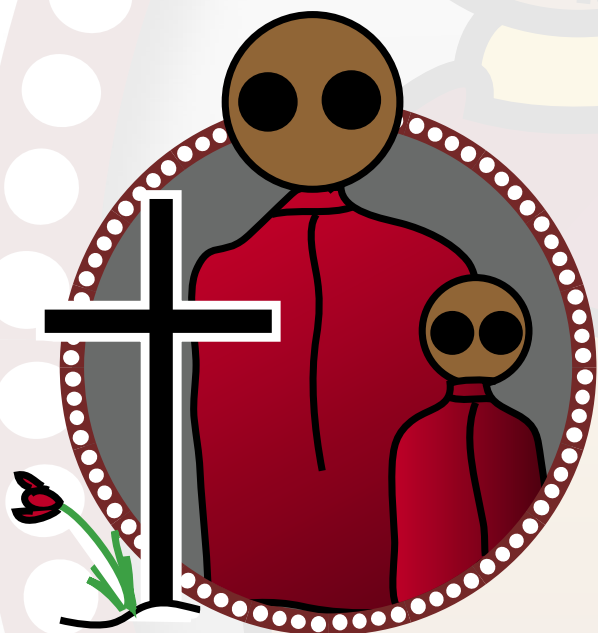
This new brochure has been redesigned by the
Indigenous Substance Misuse Health Promotion
Unit due to demand for the information.



INDIGENOUS
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SORRY BUSINESS

GRIEF AND LOSS



UNDERSTANDING GRIEF AND LOSS

In the old days our people had ways of mourning and letting go - ceremonies and customs. We probably don't know it but we're still doing some of these things today. Like the big funeral and singing and wanting to be in our own country. And remembering for a long time.

It's not only people dying that causes us grief. People are going to prison, families have been split up, people 'out of it' on yarrdi or alcohol are not really there for their families. A lot of us feel deep down grief about what's been taken away, our land, our culture, our kids and all that.

When we lose someone, (or something like our land), our feelings can be pretty confusing. We can be angry and sad and guilty all at once. That's something about grief, its not just one feeling like sad, but a whole lot and different people have different amounts of these feelings and for different lengths of time. Or we mightn't feel much at all we've had so much grief that we are numb, our feelings have shut down. There's not really any best way to grieve. Just because Auntie or Uncle over there is weeping and wailing and you aren't, doesn't mean they are sadder or doing it better - it's just their way and yours may be different. For a start, men tend to be quieter than women.



STAGES OF GRIEF

We are losing our people in all sorts of ways. Our people are going to prison, our children are being taken away, our people are 'gone' with the booze or drugs.

And we're still losing our heritage and our rights, our culture and way of life are still being attacked by some white people. We've all got stories to tell about losing our land, our language, our knowledge.

Some people think that we are still suffering from all the pain of the white invasion, that it is passed down from one generation to the next.

Learning to sit down and talk with other people about how we are feeling is a good way to heal from the hurt

"a shared load is a lighter load"

You might have heard someone talk about the stages of grief. This is just a way of helping people to understand some of their feelings.

Grieving involves lots of different feelings and can take quite a long time, sometimes years. It's the way we say goodbye to someone important to us and then get back to living without that person.

During the process of grieving, at different times we can have some or all of the following feelings:-

shocked or numb (not feeling anything), really **sad** (like it will never end), really **depressed** (like its too hard to live another day), maybe **relieved** that its all over, **angry** (with ourselves, the person who has gone, even with God), **guilty** (for still being alive, for some of the things we have done or not done).

We can find it really hard just doing the normal things in life like eating, sleeping, shopping and talking. Probably we'll have some physical effects too, all the stress can cause headaches, cramps, body pains (heartache too), strange feelings in our heads, all sorts of things, we can even think we are going crazy.

Even though we all do it differently, we all have to grieve because it's how we let go so we can get on with living again. Trying to drown feelings with alcohol or drugs doesn't work, as soon as we stop, the grief process starts up again, we've just put it off for a while with a binge.

CHILDREN AND GRIEF

It's important that we let our children grieve too. They have just as many feelings but are probably a bit more confused about what is going on, so adults may need to help them to understand about all the different feelings of grief.

