



Grief, Loss and Trauma

Unfortunately grief, loss and trauma are commonplace in our communities. Some communities experience high rates of death due to not only physical illness, but suicide as well. There is also the effect of losing a family or community member by mental health related issues or substance use problems. This means that there are some members of the community that are regularly attending funerals of their loved ones and other community members to mourn their passing. We must also not forget that there is also additional unresolved grief surrounding the forced removal of children from our communities, this impact has resulted in problems with identity, acceptance, parenting and transgenerational trauma.

Despite all the past and continuing inequities and unfinished business, Aboriginal people have a strong and deep history of survival. The great news is that there are many stories of great resilience and strength not only on an individual level, but also the family and community levels. It is very important to acknowledge and build upon these stories strengths of Aboriginal families and communities in overcoming hard times.

Some of these strengths include:

- Endurance
- Creativity
- Humour
- Adaptability
- Tolerance
- Resilience
- Compassion
- Self reliance
- Dignity and Respect
- Cultural Integrity
- A strong spirituality and a deep understanding of human beings and their environment

What we must remember about grief, loss and trauma

There are a few things that we must try and remember about grief, loss and trauma, and these include:

- Grief is unfortunately a part of life
- However too much grief is not good for you
- Grief, loss and trauma can result in depression or other illnesses which can be treated

And

- If you are worried about someone, advise them to see a health worker, Doctor or counsellor

What sort of feelings may I feel?

When you are dealing with grief, loss and trauma you may go through stages of different feelings. There are some normal feelings that may occur whilst dealing with these issues, and these can include shock, anger, fear, sadness and guilt.

We must realise that these feelings are normal and they affect every person differently so some things that you should remember to do are:

- Express your emotions
- Share your feelings with people you trust
- Take time to be close to family, friends and the community
- Make the effort to sleep and take time to rest

Although experiences of trauma and loss are not necessarily causes of mental illness, unresolved emotional distress or overwhelming grief can lead to poor mental health.

Where can I go for help?

Sometimes we face events in our lives that we are unable to handle ourselves or with help of family and friends and sometimes there are situations in our lives that might be too much for us to cope with. In these cases, there are options out there for you to take.

Some of these options can include:

- Counselling (Someone to yarn too)
- Behavioural and Lifestyle changes (Health Choices)
- See a doctor who might give you medication that can help

If you just want to have a yarn or if you would like to find out more information contact any of your local Community Mental Health or other services listed below.

The Aboriginal Social & Emotional Wellbeing Fact Sheet Series was designed by the Aboriginal Social & Emotional Wellbeing workers David Freeman & Brenda Freeman based at Campbelltown Community Mental Health Service
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