

Grief

Young people respond to death in different ways, but there are a range of normal grief-related reactions which they may experience.

These include:

- Shock and disbelief that the person has died;
- Longing for the person – wishing they were around to touch or be comforted by;
- Feelings of anger or resentment – for being abandoned, for the unfairness of the loss or towards those seen as responsible for the loss;
- Feeling sad that the person has gone;
- Guilt – that they were unable to help the person or that they were in some way responsible for the death;
- Anxiety – about the future and how things will be without that person in their life;
- Preoccupation with thoughts of the person who has died;
- Difficulty concentrating; and
- Changes to sleep patterns and appetite.

Families are extremely important in supporting a young person who is grieving. You can support your child by doing the following:

- Acknowledge your child's loss and the need to take time to grieve
- Provide information about normal patterns of grief
- Encourage continued participation in enjoyable activities such as sports or hobbies, and family activities
- Help your child find meaning in what has happened and foster a sense of hope for the future

Social Media

When a death of a young person occurs, social media may be a place where friends and other young people share their grief and memories. Messages posted online (e.g., on social media profiles) are important as they can have a negative or positive effect. In some instances it may be helpful for the young person to work through their grief; however this may also make others more vulnerable and distressed.

We would ask that you discuss the use of social media with your child and ask if it is helpful or distressing for them. It may also be necessary for you as parents/guardians to monitor and be aware of your child's online activities and any discussions that may be occurring online.

Seeking help

If you have any concerns about your child you can contact a teacher or a member of the Student Wellbeing Team at your child's school. Alternatively, you or your child can contact eheadspace for support.

eheadspace is a free service that offers online and telephone mental health support to young people aged 12-25 years and their families or friends. Young people may contact eheadspace if they need advice, are worried about their mental health or are feeling isolated or alone.

eheadspace can be contacted as follows:

- chat at **eheadspace.org.au**, seven days a week from 9am to 1am AEST (Australian Eastern Standard Time)
- call on **1800 650 890**, seven days a week from 9am to 1am AEST.