



Cranford Hospice

Te Kahu Pairuri o Cranford
ki Te Matau-a-Māui

Coping with grief *Te aro ki te pouri*





*He Kotahitanga
He mea paihere
Na te Rangimārie*

**In unity and peace
we support**

Grief is a natural process

He ara māori te auhi

Grieving is the process of allowing yourself to feel and express the impact a loss has had on you. As you work through all your thoughts, memories and emotions associated with your loss and you process your grief, you begin to slowly but surely adjust and adapt to your new reality—life without that person in it. Adjusting to life without your loved one will help you discover how to live and enjoy life again.

Grief is unique

He rerekē te auhi i ia whatumanawa

Your grief will be a direct reflection of your relationship with the person you have lost. When a bond is deep and meaningful, your grief may reflect that depth. If your relationship was complex your grief might carry some of that complexity too. This is why grief is unique and often complex.

While it is natural to compare your feelings of grief with others and for others to compare their grief experiences with you, the truth is, grief can never be compared, because nobody has the exact relationship you had with the person who has died.

Grieving is personal and different for everyone. How you grieve depends on many factors, including your personality and coping style, your life experience, your faith, and the nature of the loss.

The grieving process takes time. Healing happens gradually, it can't be forced. There is no 'normal' timeline for grieving.

Grief affects all aspects

Ka ngau te pouri i tō katoa

Most people think about all the emotions that typically accompany the grieving process, but the truth is grief also has a mental, physical, spiritual, social and behavioural impact not just emotional.

Common symptoms of grief

Ngā tohu o te manawa marū

Emotional

- Shock/disbelief
- Sadness
- Guilt/betrayal
- Anger/irritability
- Anxiety/fear
- Despair/loneliness
- Confusion/uncertainty
- Helplessness/hopelessness
- Restlessness/fidgety

Cognitive/Mental

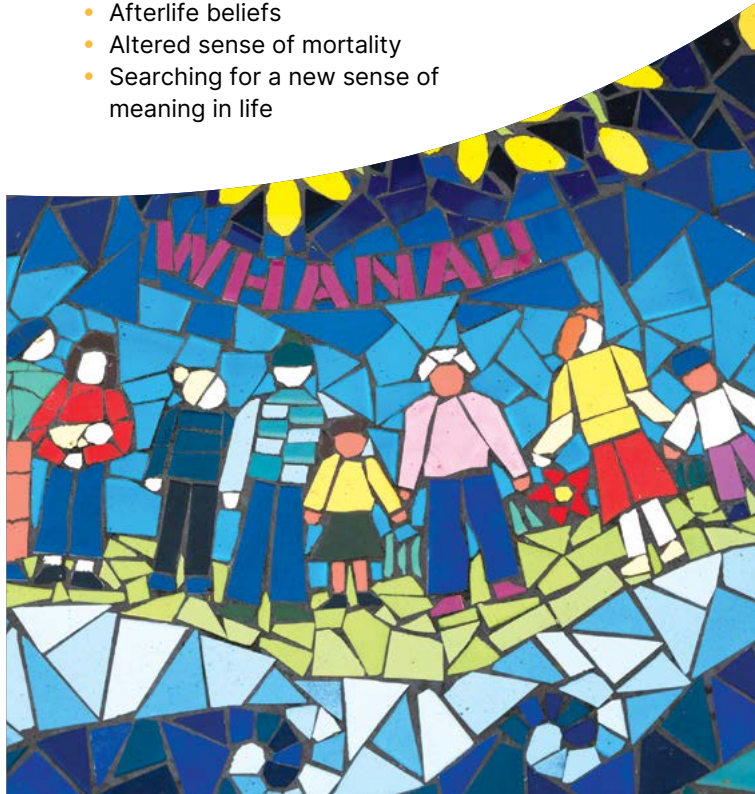
- Denial/avoidance
- Memory issues
- Difficulty concentrating
- Obsessive thoughts
- Flashbacks/intrusive thoughts
- Nightmares/bad dreams
- Altered view on life
- Challenged beliefs
- Overactive mind
- Thinking everyone is watching you

Physical/Behavioural

- Dizziness
- Tight chest/muscle tension
- Difficulty breathing
- Heart problems
- Weakened immune system
- Sleep issues
- Digestion issues
- Secondary effects from unhealthy coping mechanisms, for example, drugs, alcohol, under-eating, over-eating.

Spiritual

- Questioning or angry with God
- Faith crisis
- Deeper faith
- Expansion of spiritual beliefs
- The world feels unjust/unfair
- Afterlife beliefs
- Altered sense of mortality
- Searching for a new sense of meaning in life





Having language for your grief is helpful

He kupu hei rongoā

It can be common for people to struggle to talk about their grief because it is often difficult to find the right words. The grief model below can help give you and those supporting you helpful language.

Grief can be like the waves in the ocean.

In the beginning our grief waves can often be powerful and strong, like tidal waves.

Sometimes knocking us off our feet, temporarily and with additional waves lining up behind it.

But like the waves in the ocean our grief builds, breaks and then recedes back into the ocean providing us with a small reprieve before the next wave arrives.

In time and as we 'process our grief' these waves reduce in size and the space between them grows.

Until eventually we are able to remember our loved one and experience more manageable waves that lap against our ankles or knees.

Family grief can sometimes be messy
He kōpikopiko te pouri o te whānau

When a family grieves a loss, a flood of different emotions, reactions, and coping mechanisms will emerge, likely at different paces.

Some family members might be ready to discuss the loss while others withdraw into silence. Some will want to surround themselves with loved ones, while others need more time alone.

Grief will never be easy or tidy. These five principles can help a family orientate itself:

- 1 **Respect different forms of grief.** Give yourself space to grieve in your way and your family members space to grieve in theirs.
- 2 **Respect different paces of grief.** Allow those around you to follow their own pace and adjust your expectations accordingly.
- 3 **Make room for feelings in your home.** Respecting different forms of grief means making space for each other's emotions. If you're a parent, remind your children that it's ok to feel sad, confused, or unsure—and it's just as ok if they feel fine. Take time to check in with one another. Ask, "How are you really feeling today?" and listen with care.
- 4 **Set boundaries.** Know what you're able to give—and be ok if you can't give right now. It's important to remember that family members may not always be able to meet all of each other's needs.
- 5 **Seek outside help if needed.** This could be from a friend or professional person. Sometimes it is helpful to speak with someone who is not in the same grief process as your family.

Grief decreases our tolerance for stress
Ka ngoikore te manawanui i te auhi

When your emotional cup is so frequently full with a huge array of grief emotions there is little room for any additional ones.

Normally we are in a calm and rested emotional state and it takes time for our stress/emotions to build. In grief however, our levels of emotion are frequently high and it is often the smallest of things that take us from managing to feeling overwhelmed.

Due to this factor our stress tolerance is compromised, leaving us vulnerable to fight or flight behaviour.

- FIGHT**
- Angry outbursts
 - Constantly frustrated
 - Muscle tension
 - Demanding
 - Controlling
 - Critical of others

- FLIGHT**
- Anxiety
 - Restless/fidgety
 - Over-sleeping
 - Social withdrawal
 - Non-communicative
 - Suppressing emotions

Grief decisions are often driven by emotion

Ka aratakina ngā whakatau e te ngākau

Following the death of a loved one, it's common to feel the urge to make changes, sometimes big ones. You might consider financial decisions, changing jobs, moving house, letting go of personal belongings, or deciding when and where to lay their ashes to rest.

Avoid making big decisions while you are grieving. They need to be well thought out and evaluated - intense emotions often distort this process and make us more prone to impulsive decisions that are driven by emotion and can lack logic.

There is no timeline that needs to be followed. Allow yourself the space you need to fully process these important decisions so that you can live with the outcome without regret.

Helpful coping tips

He kete kupu tautoko

Grief can be disorientating, where sometimes you even begin to question your own sanity. The following tips have come from people who have lived through loss and what helped them.

Accept that people may feel awkward around you.

People often have the right intention, but it is common for people to sometimes choose the wrong words or advice at the wrong time.

Be kind to yourself

You are in pain, now is not the time for self-judgement, but it is the time for self-care. Do things that lift or soothe you.

Remember you are not alone

Loss is a part of life, part of being human. Find someone you can talk to that understands what you are going through.

Access your support group

If someone you cared about was grieving, you would most likely want to be there to support them, so allow others to support you.

If you cannot talk

Some people find having emotional conversations difficult. If this is you, try expressing your full range of emotions in a grief journal. Expressing your grief will help you work through your emotions.

Allow your grief the expression it needs

There is no way around grief, the only way is through. Honour your grief by facing it head on.

Maintain the basics

It might sound silly but ensuring you are getting enough sleep, eating regularly and well, and exercising frequently all helps.

Find a creative outlet

Even if you have never tried to express your feelings artistically before, give it a try, for example painting, poetry, music or dance.

Balance work with rest

Grief is exhausting, let yourself rest when you need to and try not to get too lost in keeping busy or trying to distract yourself from the pain.

Laughter is great medicine

Grieving people often feel guilty for laughing and feel that they should be sad. Laughter and having fun doesn't dishonour your loved one.

Time in nature

Bush walks, gardening, swimming, or going to the beach help to connect with something larger and greater than yourself.

Lean on your faith

For some this is religion and for others it more a spiritual practice. Whatever resonates with you, now is the time to connect with it.

Don't let anyone tell you how to feel, and don't tell yourself how to feel

Your grief is your own, so no one else can tell you what to do and how to do it. Let yourself feel without embarrassment or judgment.

Rediscover your coping strategies

If in the past you've experienced difficult times and had lots of emotions, what healthy things did you do that helped you cope. Are those strategies helpful now?

Plan for grief triggers

Anniversaries, birthdays, holidays and important milestones can reawaken painful memories and feelings. Plan to do something special with someone you feel ok to be yourself around.

If in trouble, seek help

Sometimes grief exceeds our ability to cope, and we have desperate thoughts about intentionally harming ourselves or we simply feel lost or stuck in our grief. These are all signs you should seek professional support from your GP or an experienced counsellor.

Asking for help is a strength, not a weakness.





One-on-one grief support *He whiri takirua*

- Counselling
- Music Therapy
- Interactive Drawing Therapy
- Emotional Support Volunteers
- Kaitakawaenga | Māori liaison

Group grief support *He whiri takirōpū*

Bereavement programme

This seven week programme is designed to support and educate people about their grief. Registration is required.

Grief support group— Compassionate Friends

An informal support group that allows people to chat over a coffee at a local café. There is no need to register, just drop in when it suits you.

Cranford Hospice grief support *Te Kahu Pairuri o Cranford*

The care and support provided by Cranford Hospice extends beyond the patient to their loved ones and whānau. We offer one-on-one and group grief support. We are happy to talk with you about our different services and what would suit you best.

To find out more about our grief support services, programmes and support groups, visit cranfordhospice.org.nz/bereavement-support or phone **06 878 7047** to speak with one of our team.

Cranford Hospice

Te Kahu Pairuri o Cranford ki Te Matau-a-Māui

Our mission is to provide the very best specialist palliative care and bereavement support, with commitment, collaboration and compassion.

To achieve this, we work in collaboration, with energy and compassion to provide, educate, and campaign for specialist palliative care and bereavement support in Hawke's Bay.

As a community charity, Cranford Hospice depends on the generosity of individuals, businesses, trusts, community groups, and associations. Their support enables us to continue providing expert care and compassion to our community.

cranfordhospice.org.nz

*Ehara taku toa i te toa
takitahi, he toa takitini*

**My strength is not as an
individual, but as a collective**