



GRIEF AND LOSS DURING COVID-19

UPDATED 5/27/2020

This resource was developed by people with lived experience of grief and loss. Everyone's loss is unique, we hope this resource is helpful for you. We'd also like to acknowledge cultural differences in grieving. Please feel free to adapt the information in this resource for your own situation.

The death of a loved one is one of life's most difficult experiences. If you're here because you've lost someone you care about, we'd like to acknowledge your loss and the emotions you may be experiencing.

When we lose a loved one, it may feel like our world has been turned upside down. Nothing is the same anymore. Experiencing a loss during COVID-19 may bring extra challenges. In addition to grieving, you may also be concerned about preventing the spread of COVID-19.

GRIEF AND LOSS – CHALLENGES DURING COVID-19

- Grief is the natural response to losing a loved one. This can present in many ways and emotions may be intensified by requirements around physical distancing.
- You could be dealing with your own emotions of not being able to be with your bereaved whānau or friends for comfort and support.
- With so much happening in the world right now, you may feel overwhelmed or numb. It's actually ok to be numb for a time, to focus on surviving in the immediate now. Your grief is still there, underneath it all.
- Grief is different for everyone, try not to judge yourself or others. Let go of expectations right now.

FUNERAL, TANGIHANGA AND HONOURING A PERSON'S LIFE

Requirements around physical distancing mean the traditions we associate with public funerals and tangihanga have paused. Funerals and tangihanga can go ahead under Alert Level 2 but are restricted to no more than 100 people. The Ministry of Health says when holding a gathering, play it safe — maintain hygiene standards and meet existing record-keeping requirements for contact tracing.

If you need to, you may choose to delay some of the ways you would like to farewell the person who has died until the COVID-19 pandemic is over.

Yet we cannot delay grief. Having a service or activities and rituals to engage in within the first few weeks of a death can help with adapting to loss.

For more information please see the [Funeral Directors Association of New Zealand website](#).



GETTING THROUGH TOGETHER – WHĀIA E TĀTOU TE PAE TAWHITI

Grief at this time can feel isolating. You may feel disconnected from the rest of the world. Know it's not just you, and you are not alone.

- Let people know what's happened, it's important that you don't feel alone in your grief. Seek the support of whānau, friends and colleagues to help you cope.
- Keep a notebook handy and write down anything you may need to remember. Lots can be going on and it can often be hard to focus and keep track of things.

DISTANCE NOT DISTANT – TINANA TAWHITI, WHAKAARO TATA

Phone and social media platforms offer us ways to connect and keep in touch, to share memories, photos and stories of the person who has died. Even if we can't be together in person, we can reach out to feel less alone. You could even organise a service for whānau, live on social media or by phone.

- Talking about how you are feeling helps. Perhaps ask a friend to check in with you every few days via text, phone or video apps. It's the gentle support and connection with others that counts.
- Sympathy cards can be used to share remembrance stories. Find a card with lots of blank space inside and write a personal story or memory of the person you'd like to share. It's healing to write a precious memory down and the bereaved family may appreciate receiving these.
- If there are tamariki/children in your whānau, check-in with them often. Answer their questions honestly. Tamariki may appear sad and happy in the space of minutes. Let them set their own pace.
- It's ok to alternate grieving with other activities. Doing this can help us adjust to loss while managing everyday life.
- Try to limit how much news and social media you consume – when we are experiencing sadness and trauma, regular news can be distressing.



**REMEMBER: IN GRIEF YOU CAN
ONLY DO THE BEST YOU CAN,
BE KIND TO YOURSELF.**

SEND AROHA FROM AFAR TO THE WHĀNAU PANI/BEREAVED FAMILY

Physical distancing means this may be a challenging time to support someone who is grieving. International travel restrictions mean attending to events overseas is prohibitive. You may need to be creative in how you offer support during COVID-19.

- Technology – using video apps can connect you face-to-face virtually. When you connect make sure you listen to the person you're supporting. Acknowledge their pain and don't offer advice. Remember silence is ok too. Schedule regular catch ups on the preferred platform and stick to the schedule.
- Reach out, make yourself available not just in the short term but in the weeks and months to come.
- Awahi/support and comfort your whānau pani/bereaved family and friends to get through this time of loss together. Send aroha from afar.



HELPLINES AND REMOTE SUPPORT DURING COVID-19

Telehealth and virtual appointments are still the preferred option for health providers in Level 2. GPs may offer face to face appointments or remote services by phone, online or video consult. If your GP is not available, find one that is. If you do not find your GP helpful at this time, it's ok to contact another GP.

Grief counselling is available online and by phone. For more information and to find a counsellor please see:

[The New Zealand Association of Counsellors](#)

[Talkingworks](#)

[New Zealand Psychological Society](#)

[New Zealand College of Clinical Psychologists](#)

[Skylight Trust](#)

[The Grief Centre \(Auckland\)](#)

[Grief Support Services \(Tauranga\)](#)

[Loss and Grief Centre \(Invercargill\)](#)

FREE 24/7 PHONE HELPLINES ARE OPEN DURING COVID-19

Free call or text 1737 anytime to talk to a trained counsellor.

Lifeline – 0800 543 354 or free text 4357 (HELP)

Youthline – 0800 376 633 or free text 234

Samaritans – 0800 726 666

Please see the Mental Health Foundation website for more [helplines](#)

HELPFUL RESOURCES

[Funeral Directors Association of New Zealand](#)

[Ministry of Health - COVID-19, Deaths, funerals and tangihanga](#)

[Te Rōpu Whakaupapa Urutā - Tikanga and Tangihanga advice](#)

[Te Puni Kōiri - COVID-19 information for Māori](#)

[Le Va - #CatchYourself Respect your bubble](#)

[Le Va - When you're grieving](#)

[Mental Health Foundation - Looking after mental health and wellbeing during COVID-19](#)

[Te Puni Kokiri - Protect our whakapapa](#)

[Te Pūtahitanga - #Manaaki20](#)

[Victim Support](#)

FOR THE LATEST INFORMATION, UPDATES AND ADVICE ON COVID-19

Please see the New Zealand Ministry of Health, [Manatū Hauora website](#)

**GETTING
THROUGH
TOGETHER**

WHĀIA E TĀTOU TE PAE TAWHITI

ALL RIGHT?

 **Mental Health Foundation**
mauri tū, mauri ora OF NEW ZEALAND