

**Supporting NSW communities,  
families and individuals  
experiencing loss and grief.**

[www.nalag.org.au](http://www.nalag.org.au)



**NALAG**  
National Association for  
Loss and Grief (NSW) Inc

## Helping someone who is grieving

When someone has experienced a loss, they will need to make adjustments in their lives, both big and small. These changes could bring uncertainty, frustration, fear and sadness as each new day comes along. Grief is about adapting to change in life, thoughts, hopes, beliefs and the future.

### Be a good listener

Grieving people need to talk about their loss and acknowledge that they have been through a difficult experience. You can't fix their grief, but you can be there to hear their story and share their journey.

### Be a shoulder to cry on

Allow the person to cry with you. Crying helps the release of emotions and improves the healing process.

### Be in touch with them

Visit the person or call them. Let them know you've been thinking of them. Write a letter, send an email, remember their special days like birthdays and anniversaries.

### Be a friend

Often just being there is all that is needed to support someone who is grieving. Everyone's journey through grief is different and can last a long or short time. Don't be afraid to speak up if you think your friends needs help.

*(Adapted from the writings of Doris Zagdanski)*

**For more information  
& referral, please contact:**

**02 6882 9222**

**info@nalag.org.au**

**[www.nalag.org.au](http://www.nalag.org.au)**

**PO Box 379  
DUBBO NSW 2830**

### NALAG BRANCHES:

#### MUDGEES

**0488 225 710  
mudgee@nalag.org.au**

#### BELLINGEN/NAMBUCCA

**0448 084 792**

#### HUNTER

**0409 151 646  
jperino@nalag.org.au**

#### GRIEF SUPPORT

**(Telephone only)  
0439 922 201**

#### GREATER SYDNEY

**0427 614 010**

*Please note that NALAG is unable to provide crisis support. Our operational hours are from 9am-5pm weekdays.*

## Bushfires

**How bushfires can affect  
your life**

**[www.nalag.org.au](http://www.nalag.org.au)**

## How can bushfires affect your life?

Bushfires happen quite often in Australia. Often they occur way out in the bush, a long way from towns. Some people live on farms or in the bush and their homes, sheds or animals can be lost in a bushfire.

Wherever we live, we can all be affected by bushfires:

- You or your family may have been caught up in a bushfire
- You may live in an area where bushfires occur frequently
- You and your family or friends may have lost things in a bushfire
- We may all see distressing pictures on Facebook, TV or in newspapers and other media about bushfires, people losing their homes, animals and even human lives
- Wind can carry smoke from bushfires for long distances. Smoke makes breathing difficult, especially for people who already have health problems or respiratory conditions like asthma.

## Loss and grief associated with bushfires

If you and your family have lost someone or some property in a bushfire, then the feelings associated may include:

- Sadness at having lost things that are important to you
- Fear when you think about what happened or what might have happened

- Apprehension about what will happen in the future, such as where will you live or how to get back to a normal life
- Being easily angry and upset
- Not wanting to eat
- Having nightmares
- Have difficulty putting the fire out of your mind
- Feeling physically unwell (stomach aches, headaches)
- Finding it hard to make decisions
- Difficulty in focusing and concentrating
- Lapses in memory
- Difficulty in breathing, feeling tense and sick
- Heightened responses
- Muscular tension and pain

**All of these reactions are normal.**

## Helping yourself

Although painful and difficult, our reactions to a traumatic event such as a bushfire are normal.

It is important that you give yourself time to think about what has happened and to grieve for things that have been lost  
Here are some other suggestions:

- Alternate periods of physical activity and relaxation
- Maintain a healthy diet
- Keep yourself busy by structuring your time
- Keep your life as normal as possible
- Make as many daily decisions as you feel you can control
- Don't make any big life changes

- Spend time with others but allow yourself time to think and feel
- Talk it out
- Be kind to yourself
- Do things that make you feel good.
- Remember your reactions are normal and don't feel that you are "crazy"
- Talk with others about how you are feeling
- Keep up with regular activities and all the things that are normal in your life
- Learn relaxation and other stress management skills
- Seek support from a professional counsellor
- Take time out for yourself

## What to watch out for:

- Overuse of drugs or alcohol
- If you are becoming isolated, ask for help

If these things continue to affect you severely or go on for a prolonged period without easing, you may need to seek help from a professional.

**NALAG is here to assist.** There are others, such as counsellors, psychologists and social workers, who can be found in the phone book. For children and young people there is the Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800; For adults Lifeline: 13 1114