

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

www.nalag.org.au



NALAG
National Association for
Loss and Grief (NSW) Inc

Helping someone who is grieving

When someone has experienced a loss, there will be big and small adjustments needed to be made in their lives. These could bring uncertainty, frustration, fear, sadness and change 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)

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Termination of Pregnancy

Grief reactions associated
with elective termination of
pregnancy

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Grief reactions associated with elective termination of pregnancy

Deciding what to do about an unplanned pregnancy can be difficult and can result in many mixed feelings. Being able to talk through your decision-making with a counsellor can be helpful as it enables a woman to explore the choices she has.

How do women feel after a termination?

There is no "right" way to feel after a termination. Common feelings may be as varied as relief, gratitude, sadness, anger, guilt, confidence, doubt, etc. As there is no right or wrong way to feel, it is important to know that your feelings count, no matter what they are.

Just as there is no 'right' way to feel after a termination, there is no 'right' way to cope. Some women may feel a need to make some sort of sense out of their experiences of unplanned pregnancy, of having to make hard choices and of the physical reality of the termination itself.

Some women may feel they receive mixed messages from society about the rights and wrongs of termination. For some, the issue is a very private matter, and they can feel alone in coming to terms with the experience. Some women describe a sense of loss. Sometimes a new loss can bring back sadness associated with previous losses.

For many women there may be a mixture of both positive and troubling feelings. When people experience a loss such as a pregnancy termination, they may need to grieve. They may have feelings of denial, depression, guilt, anger and regret. Grief is a painful but necessary process, and is never smooth. Sometimes feelings of grief do not appear immediately after the termination but can come months or even years later. Others, such as family and friends, may not recognise the grief and the need to grieve because they see the termination as an act of choice. People grieving following a termination can feel very alone. The partner and the would-have-been grandparents may also grieve.

Ways to cope with grief:

- Sadness and grief can be normal reactions to a crisis such as an unplanned pregnancy.
- Crying is a normal reaction to grief. Be prepared to feel sad, so it will not come as a surprise.
- It can be helpful to speak to a supportive person such as a counsellor or GP.
- Remember that a woman's needs, goals and plans are important.

Potential warning signs

Crying uncontrollably, suffering sleep or eating disturbances, feelings of suicide, and turning to alcohol and drugs, are serious warning signs and should not be ignored. If this happens, it is important to seek the help of a counsellor.

Positive feelings after a termination

Many women feel very relieved when a termination is over. They may also feel very confident and powerful about themselves if they can make a rational, mature and responsible decision about themselves and their own bodies.

Coping

- Allow yourself time to grieve, to cry, and to talk about the emotions you feel.
- Partners can also experience a wide range of feelings and may be unsure how to comfort and help their partner. Remember males and females grieve differently. Talking to each other can help you to be aware of each other's feelings.
- Find someone you can talk to who will understand and listen.
- You may benefit from contacting a support group (like SANDS) and talking to other parents who had had a similar experience.
- Do not expect too much of yourself, and try to be with people with whom you feel most comfortable.

*Adapted from Grief Link resources website:
www.grieflink.asn.au*