

*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, 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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## SIDS

Grief reactions associated  
with Sudden Infant Death  
Syndrome (SIDS)

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## Grief reactions associated with SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome)

The death of a baby through Sudden Infant Death Syndrome happens out of the blue. The shock and grief can be intense for parents, remaining children, grandparents and other members of the family.

### Factors affecting how people grieve

Guilt, associated with this type of death may affect the grief process. Parents and other children often blame themselves and may believe they contributed to the death in some way. Mothers often believe they may have failed to nurture their baby and fathers may feel they have not protected the family. Siblings who loved their brother or sister but may have been jealous or irritated by the baby sometimes take on a burden of guilt by inventing ways of how they caused the death. Grandparents may feel the pain of the death of their grandchild as well as the distress of their own child and relatives.

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome is diagnosed when other causes are not found. Not knowing the cause of death may leave the parents wondering and searching for an answer for the rest of their

lives. Media reports about the cause of SIDS can cause ongoing distress for parents and other family members. Police involvement, questioning of the parents or carer and the handing over of the baby to the Coroner for autopsy may add considerably to the trauma of the event and the subsequent grief process.

- Extended family and friends may help adjustment.
- The belief system of the family may assist.
- Unrealistic expectations placed on the child may affect how people grieve.
- The couple's relationship may come under stress after the death of a child. Men and women often express their grief in different ways and this may give rise to misunderstandings.
- Resources, communication and the support by other family and friends may affect the grieving process.
- The person, who found the deceased child and may have been involved in emergency procedures, could be left with vivid images and doubts about their responses, which may hinder their adjustment. Talking with a doctor about what happened may help.

Parents may experience difficulty in resuming a normal sexual relationship after the death of a child.

### Ways of remembering:

- Keep photos of your child.
- Write down all the memories of your child as a permanent record.
- Make something in remembrance of your child.
- Keep a special box of mementos.
- Create a ritual for special occasions ie lighting a candle on birthdays and anniversaries.

### Subsequent children

After the death of a child often parents choose to have another baby as soon as possible to fill the emptiness and consolidate the family unit. Counsellors recommend time for grieving before a subsequent pregnancy so families may adjust to their loss and avoid giving birth close to the anniversary of their child's death.

Most families who have had a subsequent child express feelings of healing and relief after the event.

Throughout the pregnancy and first few months after the birth, parents may be anxious and require family or professional support.

*Adapted from the Grief Link resources website: [www.grieflink.asn.au](http://www.grieflink.asn.au)*