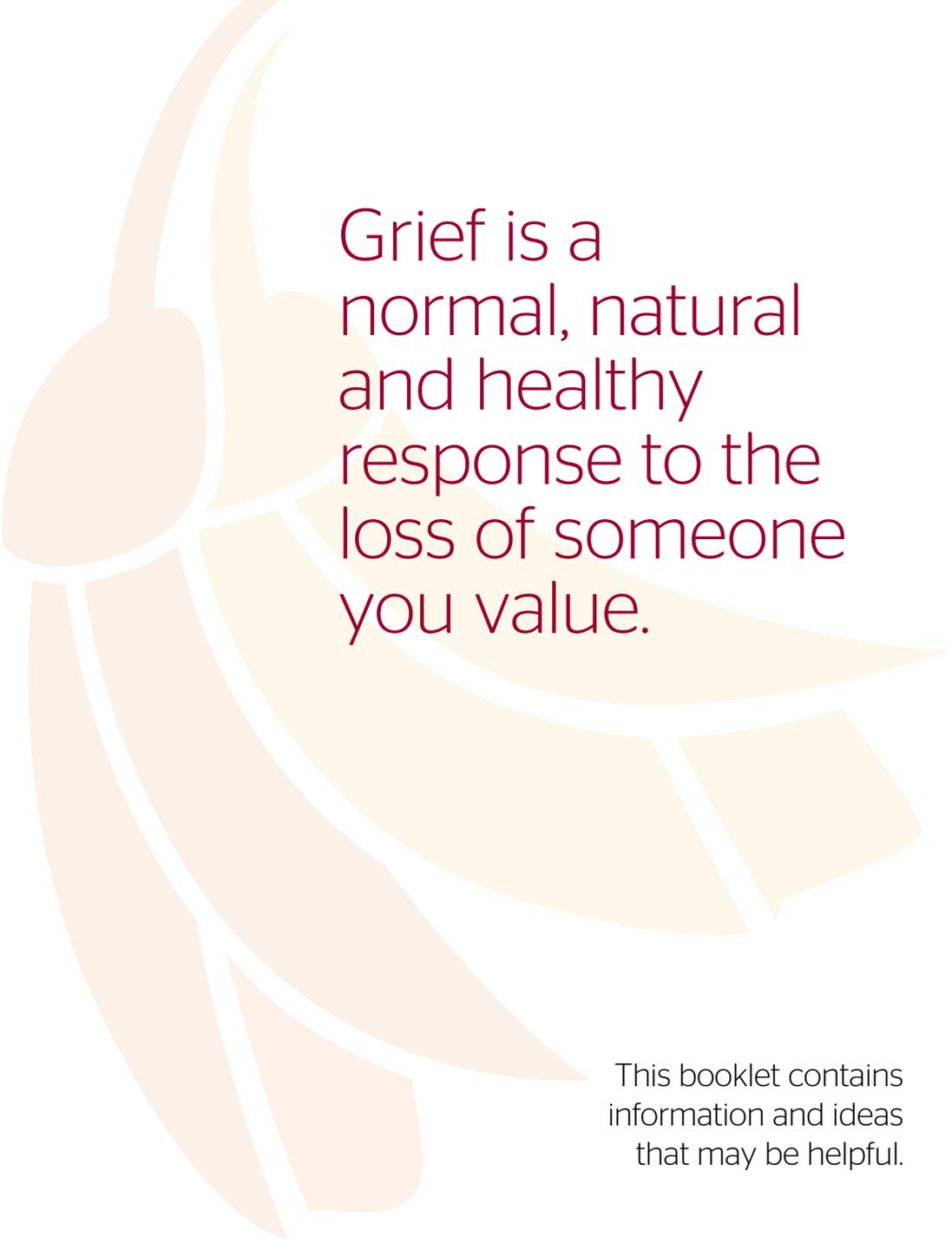


Helping with

# Journeys of Grief and Loss

through Bereavement





Grief is a  
normal, natural  
and healthy  
response to the  
loss of someone  
you value.

This booklet contains  
information and ideas  
that may be helpful.



## Your journey through grief and loss

Grief is a natural response to loss but this does not mean that everyone who has had someone close to them die will experience exactly the same feelings.

We recognise that everyone is individual. It can be helpful to know that there are a huge range of emotions that you may be feeling at this time.

Acknowledge your feelings and take them seriously.  
Allow yourself space to grieve; it is a process that can take time.

We cope with our pain as we are able. We make our own decisions about how we handle it. You know what is right for you. Those alongside you must accept and respect your chosen way.

## Grieving can have a range of effects on us

### You may feel:

- Shocked, numb
- Sad, hopeless
- Angry and resentful
- Lonely
- Relieved
- Tired, exhausted
- Confused, disorganised
- Anxious, restless
- As if the experience is unreal
- Regretful
- Panicky and afraid
- Physical pains
- Doubt

*“May the calm be widespread,  
may the ocean glisten as greenstone,  
may the shimmer of light dance  
across your pathway.”*

**While you are grieving or caring for someone who is dying, relationships can become strained, especially with close family.**

**Certain behaviours seem to help this time to be more caring and fulfilling:**

- An acceptance that we are all in this together.
- That we become aware of and accept each others' sometimes differing needs.
- That we become committed to caring/respecting of each other.
- We acknowledge we need help at times.
- We resist blame, even though we feel the urge to.
- We are willing to laugh and be normal without guilt.
- We make efforts to keep talking.
- That we are prepared to face the loss and appreciate the gains of our situation.

*“Kia hora te marino,  
kia whakapapa pounamu te moana,  
kia tere te kārohirohi i mua  
i tōu huarahi.”*

**If you are bereaved, research and experience has shown that it is useful to understand ...**

- People often cannot comfort you if they are also upset.
- You need to tell others the kind of help you need.
- We can often cut ourselves off from others if our grief seems bigger than our attachment to people around us. Try to keep some balance.
- Many people may not experience the loss to the same degree as you.
- People express their grief in different ways; some become quiet, some withdraw, some garden, some talk to others. There is no one way to do this.
- Other people often feel awkward and don't know what to do around you. Sometimes you might need to give them a start by saying you want to talk about something with them. They are often afraid of upsetting you.



## Allow yourself time to grieve

**This can be a lengthy process that may not be resolved in a matter of weeks or months...**

- Take your feelings seriously
- Allow yourself to cry
- Talk about the person who has died
- Go to your favourite place where you can be alone sometimes
- Have a plan for each day. One task, one day at a time
- Continue to talk to the dead person
- Go through photos with family and friends
- Find an isolated spot and scream
- Avoid making hasty decisions, especially major ones like moving house
- Keep in touch with family and friends
- Do what feels right for you, not what other people say you "should"
- Develop the practice of journaling



## **There is no right or wrong way to grieve...**

It takes effort to pick up the threads of your life again. Initially people often feel drained and tired, so it takes some time to recover.

It is common to feel in a vacuum now that the person you cared for has died. You may have slowly spent more and more of your time being with them, thinking about them, planning and arranging things for them. Now all this is over. People often feel exhausted, tired and lost at this point.

Carers often have mixed emotions about their loved one. Sadness that they are gone, but sometimes relief that they no longer suffer. Carers commonly wish that their loved one will die, often because the quality of their life seems low, but feel guilty about thinking this.

Sometimes the caring process has involved family members in a different way to usual. Sometimes this brings them closer together; sometimes it revives old resentments.

Being on your own now is a really strange feeling.

You may get reminders that you are on your own from films, books, friends being couples, music etc. This can be hard, as you slowly learn to be single again.



***“If we choose to move forward,  
acknowledging the sorrow and  
sadness but also the love and laughter,  
then hope travels with us.”***

Losing someone close to you is devastating and it can feel like the light of your life has gone. “How can I live without them?” feelings are common.

Feeling sad, weepy, confused, sitting in a chair staring into space, being numb, are all normal reactions as your deeper self struggles to come to terms with the loss.

Taking time to care for yourself is very important now. You will probably feel tired and may find it helpful if you rest.

For those whose parent has died, there can be feelings of regret about things that were left unsaid. Some people also comment that with the loss of a parent, no one else knows, loves and accepts like a parent can.

When someone’s remaining parent dies, some people report feeling more vulnerable knowing that the ‘protection of a parent’ is gone.

Some people notice a difference in the way they feel between their mother and father dying.

When a child dies, this can often feel unfair and against the natural order of how things are meant to be.



## People can feel grief very differently.

### You may also:

- Find it hard to concentrate, or even to remember things
- Feel lonely
- Disbelieve all that has happened and find it hard to accept
- Feel stressed
- Find it hard to sleep or eat
- Feel confused and frightened
- Feel exhausted
- Find that time seems to go really slowly
- Feel the person's presence in your home
- Have vivid dreams about the person who has died, and imagine that person is still with you
- Be preoccupied with thoughts about the person who has died
- Experience physical discomfort in your throat and stomach, have shortness of breath, or recurring headaches



## Positive things you can do...

Do something nice for yourself each day, such as:

- Listen to music
- Ring a friend
- Have a rest
- Develop a hobby
- Soak in a bath
- Go for a walk or a round of golf. Exercise is important for your health and is also a good way to work off tension.
- Seek accurate information about grief and grieving. Knowing what to expect means you will be less stressed.
- Share your experiences with other people, talk to a friend, join a support group or go to a counsellor or someone who is trained to listen.
- Take care that you eat well and are getting adequate sleep.
- Plan ahead and decide how you want to spend your weekends, anniversaries and holidays.





334 Cobham Drive, Hillcrest, Hamilton, 3216 | PO Box 325, WMC, Hamilton 3240  
Telephone (07) 859 1260 | Fax (07) 859 1266 | [www.hospicewaikato.org.nz](http://www.hospicewaikato.org.nz)