



Where to seek help

In an emergency, call 000.

Your chain of command is a primary resource that can provide advice, referral and support.

Other than in an emergency situation, contact your local ADF Medical Centre or Psychology Section. Navy personnel can seek help through their divisional system, local Alcohol and Drug Program Advisor (ADPA) or can directly contact their local Alcohol and Drug Program Coordinators.

Mental Health Resources

Local Medical Centres Your local medical officer can provide immediate assistance and referrals as required.

Psychology Support Section All Psychology Support Sections offer after-hours, critical incident support through the local Duty Officer/Officer of the Day.

Defence Community Organisation

<http://intranet.defence.gov.au/dco/> or www.defence.gov.au/dco/

The DCO provides services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week all year round including public holidays. During normal business hours the first point of call is the Duty Social Worker or Military Support Officer. Outside these core hours and on Public Holidays, calls should be directed to the National Welfare Coordination Centre (NWCC) on 1800 801 026 or if calling from overseas +61 2 93594842.

Chaplains There are Chaplains connected to all units in Australia who can provide support and appropriate referrals.

The Family Information Network for Defence (FIND) (1800 020 031)

FIND is a phone service that provides easy access to personnel information on matters of everyday interest and concern. It is a confidential service that is available to every Service person and family anywhere in Australia.

Lifeline (131 114) If you, or a friend, need to talk to someone about a problem immediately, you can call Lifeline for the cost of a local call.

Veterans and Veteran's Families Counselling Service (VCS) This service is available to veterans of all deployments and their families. VETLINE – 24 hour emergency line (1800 011 046).

ADF Mental Health Strategy All-hours Support Line (ASL) The ASL is a confidential telephone triage support service for ADF members and their families that is available 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. (1800 628 036) (FREECALL within Australia) and (61 2 9425 3878) (outside Australia)

Australian Defence Force Mental Health Strategy (ADFMHS)

Defweb Address <http://intranet.defence.gov.au/dsg/sites/dmh/>
Internet Address www.defence.gov.au/health/DMH/i-dmh.htm
Email DMH.mentalhealth@defence.gov.au



Australian Government
Department of Defence

ADF Mental Health Strategy

GRIEF




be
well

work
well

live
well

Z00 31620-18



Most people at some time will need to deal with grief. This is particularly true for Defence personnel and families, due to the sometimes dangerous and difficult environment in which we work. Grief is a simple word to describe a complex and often bewildering reaction we experience following a significant loss.

Death is not the only loss that causes us to grieve. Other events such as divorce, miscarriage, loss of a relationship, job, possessions, or home can also cause grief. The grief process involves a range of emotional, physical and/or behavioural reactions that can leave you feeling helpless, overwhelmed with sadness, confused and/or angry. There is no right or wrong way to cope with grief and the information provided here is designed to help you recognise many of the common responses to loss. This information can help you to cope better with your feelings, as intense and unfamiliar as they may be.

Why do I feel so bad?

Grief is a complex process. Initially you may feel numbness, disbelief, and shock. During this period a person may continue doing things for a person whom has left or died.

This state helps to protect you from the intense hurt of the loss. You are surprised that the world around you continues unchanged, when you feel that your world has been shattered. As days, weeks and months go by some of these initial reactions will pass as other stages of grief follow. You may notice some of the following reactions:

Physical reaction

Physically your body may ache with tension. You may experience stomach pains, headache, changes in appetite, low energy and motivation, or poor sleep.

Other reactions may include:

- crying
- breathlessness
- nausea
- agitation and restlessness
- being particularly susceptible to viruses, rashes or other minor illness.

Emotional/psychological reaction

Some people have experiences like seeing their loved one's face in a crowd or crying when they smell a particular scent. These experiences are common and normal for someone grieving the loss of a loved one.

It is very common for people after a sudden loss to imagine all the 'what if's'. People may even feel guilty or blame themselves for the loss. It is not uncommon for people to try to make deals with God to return the person who is gone.

People may feel their lives have lost a purpose and some bereaved people describe wanting to die themselves.

Other common emotional and psychological reactions experienced in grief include:

- poor concentration
- fear
- panic
- depression
- guilt
- anger
- sadness
- withdrawal from friends and family.

How to best cope during the grieving process

- Ask for help and support from family members, friends, or support group.
- Tell people what helps and what doesn't.
- Talk with others who have experienced loss and grief.
- Recognise your feelings and be forgiving and patient with yourself.
- Be good to yourself.
- Use writing, art and music to let out your feelings.
- Give yourself time. There is no set time-frame for the grief process.
- Seek professional help if you feel you need it.
- Expect that although you will continue to get better, along the way there will be good and bad days.
- Be cautious. Grief cannot be side-stepped or cured by medication, alcohol or drugs. However, it may be appropriate to talk to your treating medical practitioner if you feel your symptoms are prolonged or unbearably intense.

Things to avoid during the grieving process

- Trying to distract yourself by keeping extraordinarily busy, or making significant changes in your life such as moving house or changing job, may not be the most useful approach to coping with your grief. Instead, talk about your loss and remember your loved one in ways that are meaningful to you.

Where to get help

- Local Medial Centres
- Psychology Support Sections
- Chaplains
- Defence Community Organisation