



Keeping Spirit **STRONG**

Supporting young
people following loss



MacKillop
Seasons




Like the seasons, life is filled with change.

Losses and tough times happen for us all, and for our young people too as they travel their own life's journey. Sorry Business and grieving the passing of someone we love is a life altering event and is emotionally challenging for us all. Sorry Business by suicide is especially sensitive and we're often not sure how we can support young people on their grief journey. We want to make sure we are helping the right way and not adding more stress or hurt!

There are helpful things to know and do to support young people in times of loss and grief, including loss by suicide.

Things we can know and do:

- There is no proper or wrong way to grieve. Each young person will be different in how they react and how they cope.
 - Grief can impact our body, mind, heart and Spirit, and affect our connections to others.
 - Sorry Business ceremonies/funeral time offer comfort and time with family and community. Connections with family and community, Culture and Country are important and support young people to remember their place of belonging as they grieve.
 - Often we see young people's grief through changed behaviours. Young people can be 'in and out' of grief – appearing ok one minute and upset the next.
 - For many young people, support from family, friends and community is enough to help keep Spirit strong and guide them through the journey of grief and healing. For others, a bit of extra support can be helpful.
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Things we can do:

Keeping up with everyday family and community ways

Normal ways of caring for young people are always important, but even more so when times are challenging.

- **Sticking with normal ways of everyday routines** helps support young people when they might forget or get distracted while they are grieving. Everyday things like eating, having a wash (showering), getting enough sleep, home chores, and time to relax are important. These everyday things help support a sense of same in the home.
- **Being around in the background**, and supporting family to be around at home can help too. Young people may yarn with you (or not) but being around and present can help young people feel safe and connected.
- **Supporting the normal routine** of getting to school helps friends and school staff to stay connected and support young people too. The going to school routine can help give young people a sense of certainty and reliability, while they journey through grief.
- **Trying to balance** between keeping an eye on young people (to identify any changed or risky behaviours) and giving enough space to grieve can be helpful.



Things we can do:

Listening and yarning

It's not easy yarning about loss, but it's important for young people to know we're around to listen and yarn, if and when they want or need to.



Along with yarning, we can show support through our actions. Connecting over a cuppa or cool drink, allowing the challenging yarns to happen, having a laugh, being present and really listening help young people feel cared for, supported, and can make all the difference during the grieving and healing journey.

Four ways that might help are:

1. **Setting your own grief aside for a moment** can be hard, but it's important young people know we are there for them even when we are hurting too. Having open yarns lets our young person know it's ok that they share their grief with us.
2. **Keep trying over time to have open yarns**, it may take a few times for young people to open up. Doing this also lets young people know there's no time limit on yarning about their grief and what this means for them – you'll be ready when they are.
3. **Its ok to yarn about feelings.** Bringing up feelings such as sadness, anger, fear, shame, guilt, humour, relief and others shows young people that there's no shame in sharing and it's ok not to be ok. Yarning can help make sense of these feelings and how they show up in our bodies and minds.
4. **Answer questions openly.** Young people can have questions about loss, and not know who to ask (or only yarn amongst mates and family of the same age). Giving short, caring, and honest answers, that are age appropriate, can be helpful. Be ready for the same question to come up more than once.





Things we can do:

No shame in reaching out for extra support

We all cope in different ways during Sorry Business. Some days seem good, others are not so good. When there are a lot of not good days in a row, think about whether we need to reach out for extra support. This might be for our young person, or for us.

There is no shame in yarning with others – sometimes it's good to share our grief and worries. Sharing with the right person can sometimes be tricky but keep yarning until you find the support you need.

- **If it's an emergency** and you are really worried about your young person, **calling 000** or the local hospital is a good start.
 - **Workers including doctors, school counsellors, emotional wellbeing workers, psychologists and others** can be good to yarn with for professional support.
 - **Other health and wellbeing services including 13YARN, your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Service, Kids Helpline, Lifeline and mental health support lines** can help when we're worried too.
 - **Natural helpers in our lives such as family, friends, community, Elders, teachers, Indigenous school liaison or sports coaches** can be good supports as well.
 - Caring for and supporting young people through grief can affect us as well, remember sometimes we might need someone to yarn with and get extra support for ourselves – **no shame in reaching out for you too.**
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Things we can do:

Keeping Spirit strong and looking after ourselves

Supporting young people through the grief journey may be a long road. It's always easy to say "I'm right" or "I'm good" but we need to look after ourselves to stay as strong as we can to support others – we can't help if we don't have. Looking after ourselves lets us find space to think things through, maybe about what's working and what's not working with supporting young people, and what we might do differently.

Ideas to help include:

- **Where are three places you can go,** who are three people you can yarn with, and what are three things you can do to help you feel good and motivated to keep going? It might be helpful to write these down somewhere or put them in your phone as a reminder.
- **Are you eating right, sleeping ok** and getting outside in nature or on Country most days? Small changes here and there are a big help and show young people good healthy ways to care for themselves too.
- **If you're not feeling good, yarning** with someone could help. Yarning with family, Elders or friends is a good start, yarning with your doctor or other workers can help too.

Phone

13YARN

Suicide Call
Back Service
1300 659 467

Online

thirrili.com.au



headspace.org.au



In Person

e.g., Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander
Health Service

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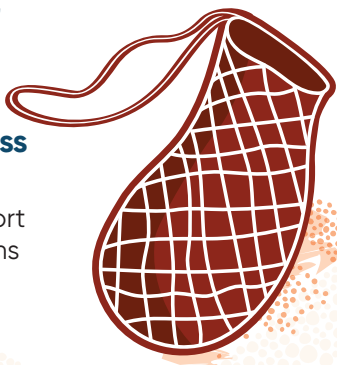
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Check out other support
resources and programs
for more ways to help
keep Spirit strong.



MacKillop Seasons
1300 379 569
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