

Key Components of Best Practice in Bereavement Telehealth



Training and Supervision



Complete training in bereavement support

Training should cover bereavement/grief, counselling skills, assessment, and risk management.

Engage in professional development

Professional development should involve expanding your skillset and improving knowledge.

Access clinical supervision

Seek ongoing support from a more experienced bereavement counsellor who can provide advice and guidance.

Call Preparation



Review client details

Become familiar with the client's background, including the context of their bereavement. Gender and culture may influence how an individual responds to bereavement and supports - be aware of these possibilities without making assumptions.

Allow sufficient time

Give yourself time to prepare before the call and time to reflect after the call. Avoid scheduling other commitments within half an hour of the expected end time.

Secure a quiet, distraction-free space

Interruptions can disrupt rapport and distract from the call purpose.

Engagement



Clarify call purpose

Clients may not know why you're calling - craft the purpose together.

Identify support needs

Every client will have different needs and preferences - tailor your support to the individual client.

Collaboratively develop goals

Develop support goals together and check in over time to see if goals need modification.

Approach



Be client-focused

Sharing your own lived experience can be helpful but must be done with sensitivity and boundaries.

Build rapport and create connection

Spend some time getting to know them (their interests and values) and find points of connection. Don't be afraid to speak about the deceased but allow the client to lead you on this.

Reflect back & match language

Build trust and shared understanding through paraphrasing.

Verbalise listening cues

Vocalise listening by saying “*mhm*” and “*I see*”.

Attend to non-verbal cues

Listen for non-verbal cues (e.g., changes in breathing) to indicate emotion.

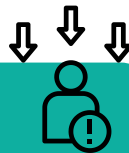
Avoid problem-solving mode

Resist the urge to problem-solve, it can feel dismissive rather than helpful. Open expression in and of itself is powerful.

Hold space for silence and discomfort

Allow for silence, even if it's uncomfortable - it shows your client this space is for them.

Risk Management



Identify and record risk factors

Risk factors can include sudden social isolation, poor sleep/appetite, and disengagement from life.

Attend to and record risk cues

Risk cues can include giving away belongings and language like “*I can't do this anymore*” and “*Things would be easier if I wasn't here*”.

Ask directly and follow up

Ask directly about suicide (e.g., “*Are you thinking of ending your life?*”) and follow up in subsequent calls. If appropriate, make a follow up call sooner than typically scheduled.

Refer to other services

If you are concerned about a client's wellbeing, refer to other services. If you are concerned about their safety, work with them to access immediate support.