

## Self-Care for Careworkers

A very satisfying and valued part of working in residential aged care is the opportunity for careworkers to form close bonds with many of the residents they care for and their families. So when a resident dies, it is only natural that you may feel a sense of loss and sadness. Sometimes this may feel overwhelming, especially if you have been caring for someone over a long period of time or for several dying residents at once.

### Key messages

- Grief is a very personal experience and will 'look' and 'feel' different for each of us.
- Reactions to loss and grief are also different for everyone and there are no set timelines or instructions to deal with them.
- It is important to acknowledge your feelings and take care of yourself and your co-workers.

### What can you do?

- Acknowledge your feelings and recognise that they are likely to be a normal reaction to loss. This can help you to manage your emotions rather than being overwhelmed by them.
- Talk to your co-workers about how you are feeling.
- Familiarise yourself with what systems your workplace has in place to support you – e.g. being able to talk with a professional counsellor.
- Look after yourself – e.g. healthy diet, regular exercise, activities that help you to relax.
- Enjoy the time you spend outside work with family and friends.
- Support your co-workers and encourage them to share their concerns and feelings after the death of a resident if they wish to.
- Ask the family's permission if you would like to attend the resident's funeral.

### Why it works

Being more aware of the impact of grief can help you to manage it. If you do not manage your grief, it can become harmful to your health, well-being, relationships and home life. By looking after yourself and your co-workers you can help to create a positive workplace and will be in a better position to provide the best possible care of residents and their families.



### Downloads

[Bereavement Support Booklet for Residential Aged Care Staff](#) – clicking here will take you to a printable version of the booklet that gives suggestions to help manage loss and grief.

### Related pages

[Introduction to a Palliative Approach](#) – clicking here will take you to a printable version of a flipchart that gives an introduction to self-care (see pages 37-46).

[Taking Care of Yourself Matters](#) – clicking here will take you to a video presentation (12 minutes) on self-care for careworkers in residential aged care.

### Relevant links

Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement – [www.grief.org.au](http://www.grief.org.au)

Beyond Blue – [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

CareSearch – [www.caresearch.com.au](http://www.caresearch.com.au)

Lifeline (national) – [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)

Residential Aged Care Palliative Approach Toolkit – [www.caresearch.com.au/PAToolkit](http://www.caresearch.com.au/PAToolkit)

