

Bereavement Support Groups

Road Trauma Support Team Victoria provides regular Bereavement Support Groups for people who have had loved ones die as the result of road trauma. These groups are co-facilitated by qualified professionals and trained Volunteer Support Group Facilitators who have experienced the death of family members as the result of collisions.

These support groups provide mutual support, and are a good opportunity for you to share your thoughts, feelings and behaviours with others who understand what you are going through.

'Before I came to this group I thought I was going crazy. When I came, I heard others say that they had experienced what I was experiencing. It normalised things for me. I love coming to the group.' (Merryn)

'The Bereavement Group acknowledges the need to remember, providing a frame-work of hope and support, with the freedom to express thoughts and emotions. We meet in anticipation of progression, but with acceptance of regression, and, as we share the dark road of grief, we are able to move on, each at our own pace in an atmosphere of individual acceptance.' (Glenda)

Please don't hesitate to call Road Trauma Support Team Victoria on **1300 367 797** for information about the Bereavement Support Groups.

The Road Trauma Support Team Victoria (RTSTV) is a non profit community based organisation dedicated to reducing the incidence and impact of road trauma in Victoria.

We are grateful for funding received from the TAC to help maintain our support services including free counselling by professional Counsellors.

RTSTV gratefully accepts donations (over \$2.00 are tax deductible) and encourages membership as a tangible way of showing your support for our mission. Please contact RTSTV for more information.



Helpline

1300 367 797

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Grief following Road Trauma

If a road crash or collision has resulted in the death of someone you care about, you will be experiencing intense grief.

The suddenness and unexpectedness of this tragedy may be leaving you feeling shocked, devastated, numb, empty and confused.



Everything around you might seem to be unreal. You may think you hear your loved one's voice or think you see him or her. You might be angry and ask 'Why him?', 'Why us?', 'Why me?'. You may be experiencing a sense of unreality as the world 'goes on', while your world has been shattered.

Some reactions bereaved people experience include shock, disbelief, denial, anger, fear, hopelessness, despair, guilt, emptiness, numbness, yearning and longing for the person to return.

These reactions might occur after the sudden and unexpected death of someone you love, and are the natural and normal expression of the intensity of your grief.

It is important for you and others around you to know that everyone grieves in different ways. Some people grieve openly while others withdraw and grieve privately. There is no right or wrong way to grieve.

There is no set timetable for grief. Grief may continue for weeks, months or years. You will miss that much-loved person for the rest of your life. Be assured though, that the intensity of the pain you are feeling at the moment will lessen in time and that life will eventually have meaning again.

Trauma reactions

Because of the suddenness and unexpectedness of the death, you may be experiencing the effects of trauma as well as grief. Trauma reactions include flashbacks, disturbing dreams, sleeplessness, increased anxiety, restlessness, irritability, sensitivity to

noise, lapses in concentration, absentmindedness and a lack of interest in trivial life experiences.

You may feel tense and experience chest pains, headaches, nausea and other physical responses.

Some people may experience very few of these responses. For other people though, these reactions may, at times, feel overwhelming.

It is important for you and those around you to know that trauma reactions are the normal reactions to an abnormal event, and are to be expected at this distressing time.

What can help?

Talk about the person who died. Find someone who is a good listener.

Some people create remembrance rituals. Others find keeping a journal and writing about their thoughts and feelings helpful.

Avoid making hasty decisions such as moving house or changing jobs. During the early months following the death of someone close, it is usually unwise to make any irreversible decisions, as you may regret them later.

Ask for help when needed.

Who can help?

Following the death of a loved one, the greatest help can come from an understanding friend or family member who can listen to you, without judgment, as you talk about the person who has died and the pain you are experiencing.

A friend who can 'be there' with you can often provide the most support to you.

Many people though, are unsure of how to help a grieving person. You may need to tell those people what you want. Allow the people around you to help you. They will want to. Don't be embarrassed to ask for support. We all need help at some time in our lives. Your time to provide support to another person will come later. At the moment it is you who needs support. Consider giving those around you a copy of 'How to support a grieving family member or friend' which is available from the Road Trauma Support Team Victoria.

It can also be helpful to speak with someone who is outside your network of family and friends. This might be your GP, a religious minister, a psychologist, a social worker, a counsellor who is experienced in grief and trauma, or another bereaved person.

Counsellors

Qualified counsellors at the Road Trauma Support Team Victoria can provide you with information about how to cope with the trauma, and with the thoughts, feelings and behaviours you are experiencing. You do not have to be concerned about the effect parts of your 'story' will have on a professional counsellor.

Volunteer Peer Supporters

Volunteer Peer Supporters are people who have, themselves, had a loved one die as the result of a collision and who wish to support others who have been involved in a similar road trauma experience.

Volunteer Peer Supporters can offer real understanding and empathy.

They know better than most people that, in 'one split second', a person's life can be changed forever. You may find it helpful to speak with someone who has had a similar experience.