

Facing a Loss

*A guide to assist you
during this difficult time*



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Quick Reference:

First Steps (First 24-48 Hours)

In the first hours after a death, it can be difficult to know what to do. This brief guide highlights a few immediate next steps. You do not need to do everything at once.

Select a funeral home or mortuary before leaving the hospital.*

Hospital staff will contact them to arrange transportation.

Notify close family and friends.

You may want to ask someone you trust to help make these calls.

Accept help from others.

Friends or family may be able to assist with calls, meals, childcare, or other immediate needs.

Gather any known wishes or important documents, if available.

This might include advance directives, funeral plans, or contact information.

Take care of yourself.

Try to rest, eat something, and take breaks as needed.

For additional steps in the days and weeks ahead, please see *What Comes Next: Practical Steps*.

**Some deaths are referred to the El Dorado County Coroner's Office for review. If this occurs, the Coroner will take custody of the person who died and will contact the family in the coming days with next steps. You do not need to choose a funeral home or mortuary until you have spoken with them.*



Introduction

The death of a loved one often brings profound sorrow that affects our mind, body, and soul. Grief can be overwhelming, frustrating, painful, difficult, scary, and lonely. At times like these, we may find ourselves at a loss regarding what to do or where to turn for support.

This bereavement guide is provided as a resource for you as you navigate through the days and weeks ahead. Within these pages you will find information on how to care for yourself and cope with the many emotions that accompany grief. Also provided is an overview of the various administrative tasks that must be performed after a death.

We invite and encourage you to utilize the information provided. If you need further support, you are welcome to reach out to Marshall staff:

Chaplain – 530-620-5360

Social Services – 530-626-2756

Advanced Illness Management – 530-620-5363

Marshall (Main Hospital Line) – 530-622-1441

Selecting a Funeral Home or Mortuary

After a death at Marshall Medical Center, families are asked to select a funeral home or mortuary before leaving the hospital. Because the hospital does not have a morgue, the funeral home you choose will come to the hospital to take your loved one into their care.*

Hospital staff will contact the funeral home once the release form has been completed.

If you are unsure which mortuary to choose, a list of local funeral homes and mortuaries appears on the following pages. You are free to choose any funeral home you wish, including one outside the local area.

Within a day or two, the funeral home will usually contact you to discuss next steps. If you prefer, you are also welcome to contact the mortuary directly. If you have not heard from them after two days, you may wish to reach out.

During your conversation with the funeral home, they can help guide you through next steps such as burial or cremation arrangements, ordering death certificates, and planning a funeral or memorial service if desired.

**Some deaths are referred to the El Dorado County Coroner's Office for review. If this occurs, the Coroner will take custody of the person who died and will contact the family in the coming days with next steps. You do not need to choose a funeral home or mortuary until you have spoken with them.*

Funeral Homes and Mortuaries

You may choose any funeral home or mortuary you wish, including one not listed here. The providers below are commonly used by families in the Placerville and surrounding areas.

If you are unsure which funeral home to choose, you may wish to call one and speak briefly with their staff before making a decision. Most are available 24 hours a day to assist families after a death.

Placerville and El Dorado County Area

Chapel of the Pines

2855 Cold Springs Road
Placerville, CA 95667
530-622-3813

El Dorado Funeral & Cremation Services

1004 Marshall Way
Placerville, CA 95667
530-206-0170

Foothill Cremation

3094 Cedar Ravine Road
Placerville, CA 95667
530-626-9508

Green Valley Mortuary

3004 Alexandrite Drive
Rescue, CA 95672
530-677-7171

Greater Sacramento Area

All Faith Cremation

3951 Development Drive, Suite 11
Sacramento, CA 95838
916-922-0992

Mt. Vernon Memorial Park & Mortuary

8201 Greenback Lane
Fair Oaks, CA 95628
916-969-1251

Simple Traditions

5921 Stanley Avenue, Suite B
Carmichael, CA 95608
916-488-2894

Sierra View Funeral Chapel and Crematory

6201 Fair Oaks Blvd.
Carmichael, CA 95608
916-481-1515

Sacramento Valley National Cemetery

Burial in a VA national cemetery is open to all members of the armed forces who have met a minimum active duty service requirement and were discharged under conditions other than dishonorable.

5810 Midway Rd
Dixon, CA 95620
707-693-2460

Faith-Specific Cemeteries

Greater Sacramento Muslim Cemetery

6330 Eagles Nest Road
Sacramento, CA 95830
916-505-1681

Home of Peace Jewish Cemetery

6200 Stockton Boulevard
Sacramento, CA 95824
916-446-1409

Cremation Societies and Other Options

Neptune Society of Northern California

5212 Garfield Avenue
Sacramento, CA 95841
916-338-1111

The Nautilus Society

2000 Marconi Avenue
Sacramento, CA 95821
916-564-1234

Trident Society

9650 Fairway Drive, Suite 120
Roseville, CA 95678
916-931-2127

MedCure

Whole body donation with free cremation services
866-560-2525
medcure.org

Marshall provides this list as a resource for families. Marshall does not endorse any specific funeral home or mortuary, and this is not a complete list of all available providers. Families are free to choose any funeral home or cremation service they wish.



What Comes Next: Practical Steps

After the death of someone close to you, there are often practical matters that need attention. It can feel overwhelming to think about these tasks while you are grieving.

Not every step listed here will apply to your situation. In addition, the timing of these tasks may vary. Some families address many of these items quickly, while others take more time. It is okay to move at a pace that feels manageable.



In the First Week

Meet with the funeral home or mortuary

The funeral home will guide you through next steps, including burial or cremation arrangements.

Begin planning a service or gathering, if desired

Some families hold services soon after a death, while others choose to wait or plan something more private. There is no right timeline. Funeral homes, faith leaders, or your loved one's church/faith community can often help with planning.

Notify additional family, friends, or community members

In the first few days, you may begin informing others of the death. Some people choose to ask a friend or relative to help share this information.

Request copies of the death certificate

Funeral homes usually assist with ordering certified copies. These are often needed for financial, legal, and administrative matters in the weeks ahead.

Consider writing an obituary or death notice

Some families choose to publish an obituary in a newspaper or online to inform the community and share information about services. Others prefer not to. This is a personal choice.

Secure the person's home and immediate needs

If your loved one lived alone, you may need to make arrangements for mail collection, care of pets, and the security of the home. You may also wish to notify neighbors or others nearby.



Tip: Ask for Help

Handling paperwork and phone calls after a death can be exhausting. Many families find it helpful to ask a trusted friend or family member to assist with some of these tasks.



Tip: Ordering Death Certificates

Many institutions require a certified copy of the death certificate. Because of this, families often request multiple copies when working with the funeral home. Ordering them later is possible, but it can take additional time.

(More information can be found in the Important Documents section)

In the First Few Weeks

Notify government agencies and benefit programs

If the person who died received Social Security benefits, the **Social Security Administration** will need to be notified. Funeral homes often assist with this process, but you are also welcome to contact your local Social Security office for more information: **1-877-545-5497** or **1-800-772-1213**. [socialsecurity.gov](https://www.socialsecurity.gov).

- » If your loved one had a will or trust, the person named as executor or trustee may begin gathering information about the estate.
- » If your loved one was a **veteran**, you may wish to ask about benefits for which they may be eligible.

Contact life insurance companies

Insurance providers can provide claim forms and instructions for submitting required documents.

Notify the person's employer

Employers may provide information about final pay, retirement plans, pensions, or insurance benefits.

Notify banks, credit card companies, and financial institutions

These institutions may require a certified copy of the death certificate and documentation from the executor or next of kin.

Cancel or update services, accounts, and automatic payments

This may include utilities, subscriptions, phone services, streaming services, and other recurring accounts. You may also need to update or stop automatic payments connected to bank accounts, credit cards, or online services. Many families find it helpful to review a recent bank or credit card statement to identify active accounts.

Notify healthcare providers and cancel prescriptions

Doctors, pharmacies, and other healthcare providers may need to update their records.

- » Unused medications should be disposed of safely according to pharmacy or community guidelines.

Notify organizations and community groups

This may include religious communities, civic organizations, clubs, or professional associations.

Consider managing online and social media accounts

Some families choose to memorialize or close social media accounts belonging to the person who died.



Tip: Many Tasks Can Wait

While some tasks need attention in the first few days, many others can be handled over the coming weeks or months. It is okay to move at a pace that feels manageable.

In the First Few Months

Address legal and estate matters

If the person who died had a will or trust, the executor or trustee will help manage the estate and distribution of assets. You may wish to consult an attorney or financial advisor for guidance.

Apply for survivor or beneficiary benefits

This may include life insurance benefits, pensions, retirement accounts, or other financial benefits.

Manage financial accounts and property

This may involve transferring ownership of assets, closing accounts, or updating titles.

Review credit reports and financial records

Some families choose to notify credit reporting agencies and review outstanding accounts or debts.

Prepare for tax and financial matters

You may need to gather financial information for future tax filings or financial planning.

Update your own legal or financial documents

After the loss of a spouse or partner, some people choose to update their own wills, beneficiaries, or financial plans.



Tip: Keep Important Papers Together

Consider keeping a folder or notebook with important documents, phone numbers, and notes related to funeral arrangements and estate matters. This can make it easier to track conversations and paperwork.

Important Documents

In the weeks and months after a death, you may be asked to provide certain documents when handling financial, legal, or administrative matters. Gathering these papers can make it easier to complete some of the tasks described in the previous section.

Some families choose to organize these documents in a folder or notebook as they locate them. Not every item listed here will apply to every situation.

Death Certificates

Many institutions require a **certified copy of the death certificate** when closing accounts, transferring property, or applying for benefits. Funeral homes usually help families request certified copies when arrangements are made. Additional copies can also be ordered later through the **El Dorado County Recorder-Clerk or Vital Statistics Office**.

Because many organizations require their own certified copy for their records, families often request multiple copies when making arrangements.

Common situations where a certified death certificate may be requested include:

- Bank or credit union accounts
- Insurance claims or mortgage insurance
- Pension plans or retirement accounts
- Social Security benefits
- Veterans benefits
- Transfer of real property or vehicles
- Stocks, bonds, or other investments
- Legal or estate matters handled by an attorney or executor

You may also encounter other situations where a certified copy is required.

Personal Identification Records

You may need identifying information when speaking with financial institutions, government agencies, or benefit programs.

Documents that may be helpful to locate include:

- Social Security number of the person who died
- Driver's license or state identification card
- Passport, if applicable
- Birth certificate
- Marriage certificate, if a spouse may be applying for benefits

Legal and Estate Documents

These documents may help determine how property, finances, and personal affairs will be managed.

Examples include:

- Will or living trust
- Advance healthcare directive or living will
- Power of attorney documents
- Property deeds or vehicle titles
- Records of investments or personal property

Some families locate these documents at home, in a safe deposit box, or with an attorney who assisted with estate planning.

Insurance Policies and Financial Records

Insurance policies and financial documents may be needed when applying for benefits or settling accounts.

Examples include:

- Life insurance policies
- Health insurance information
- Auto, home, or mortgage insurance
- Retirement accounts or pension plans
- Bank account and credit card information
- Recent tax returns

In some cases, employers may provide additional benefits such as life insurance or retirement plans.

For Military Veterans

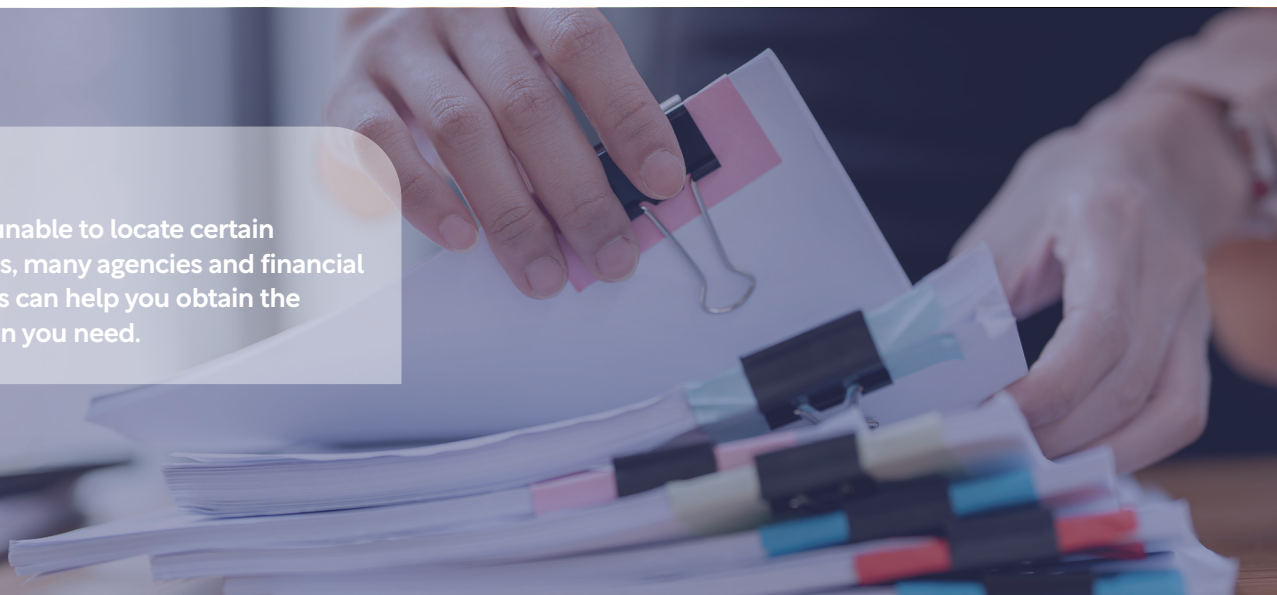
If your loved one served in the military, you may wish to locate a copy of their **military discharge papers (DD-214)** or other separation documents. These records are often requested when applying for veterans' burial benefits, military funeral honors, or a government headstone or marker.

If you are unable to locate these documents, the funeral home or the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs can often help obtain them.



Tip:

If you are unable to locate certain documents, many agencies and financial institutions can help you obtain the information you need.



What to Expect While Grieving

Grief is a natural response to the death of someone important to you. Each person's grief is unique. There is no "right" way to grieve, and no single timeline for how grief unfolds.

You may experience strong emotions immediately after a loss, or you may feel numb or disconnected at first. Your feelings may shift from day to day, or even from moment to moment. At times grief may feel overwhelming, while at other times it may feel quieter or more distant.

It is not uncommon for grief to last for weeks, months, or longer. Over time, many people find that the intensity of their grief begins to change, though memories and feelings connected to the person who died may continue throughout life.

Remember:

Grief does not follow a schedule.

Your feelings may change from day to day, and there is no "right" way to grieve.

Grief can affect emotions, thoughts, the body, and daily routines. The reactions described below are common experiences many people have after a loss.

Emotional Reactions

Grief often brings a wide range of emotions. You may find yourself crying one moment and laughing the next, or feeling angry and sad at the same time. Some people experience waves of deep sadness or longing for the person who died.

At other times, you may notice periods of emotional numbness, or feel distant from people around you. Many grieving people struggle with feelings of guilt, wondering whether they could have done something differently or done more to

help their loved one. If the death followed a long illness, it is also common to experience a sense of relief along with sadness.

You may notice strong reactions to reminders or unexpected triggers. Certain places, sounds, smells, songs, or ordinary moments may suddenly bring up memories or emotions. These reactions can happen without warning.

Your emotional response may sometimes feel stronger than the situation seems to warrant. Grief can make emotions more intense. At times you may find yourself reacting strongly to situations that might not normally affect you in the same way.

Whatever you are feeling, it is most likely a normal part of the grieving process. **It is okay to not be okay.**

Other emotions that grieving people sometimes experience include:

- Anxiety or worry
- A sense of disbelief that the person has died
- Irritability or frustration
- Feeling overwhelmed by small tasks or decisions
- Moments of peace or gratitude when remembering the person

Changes in Thinking and Concentration

Grief can affect the way you think and process information. In the days and weeks after a loss, it is common to feel mentally foggy, forgetful, or easily distracted.

You may find it difficult to concentrate, remember details, or make decisions. Some people notice themselves replaying memories connected to the illness or death, or wondering "what if" about things that might have been different. These thoughts are a common part of trying to make sense of what has happened.

Other experiences people sometimes notice include:

- Confusion or difficulty focusing
- Trouble following conversations or reading
- Dreams or vivid memories of the person who died

Physical Reactions

Grief can also affect the body. Emotional stress and changes in daily routines may lead to physical symptoms.

You may feel unusually tired, even after resting, or have trouble sleeping. Some people notice changes in appetite or energy levels. Others experience headaches, body aches, or a tight feeling in the chest or throat.

These physical responses are a common part of the body's response to loss and stress.

Other physical reactions you may encounter:

- Restlessness or difficulty relaxing
- Increased sensitivity to illness
- Digestive discomfort

Changes in Behavior

Grief may also influence your daily routines and how you interact with others.

You may find yourself crying more easily or at unexpected times. Some people feel a strong need to talk about the person who died and share memories, while others prefer quiet or time alone. It is also common to withdraw from social activities for a period of time while adjusting to the loss.

Grief can also make people feel more irritable or impatient than usual. Small frustrations may feel harder to manage, and you or others close to you may seem more sensitive or easily upset. If several family members or friends are grieving together, each person may express their grief differently.

During this time, it can help to be especially patient and compassionate with yourself and with others who are grieving alongside you.

Other behavioral changes people sometimes notice include:

- Spending more time alone
- Seeking out supportive friends or family members
- Avoiding reminders of the loss for a time
- Wanting to keep personal items or reminders close by
- Finding comfort in familiar routines or meaningful places

Remember:

Grief is not something you need to “solve” or move through in a particular way. Over time, many people gradually learn how to carry their grief while continuing to live their lives.



Taking Care of Yourself While Grieving

Grief takes a great deal of emotional and physical energy. While time plays a role in healing, many people find that caring for themselves during this period can support emotional healing.

You may find it helpful to treat yourself with the same kindness and patience you would offer a close friend who is grieving. Some days you may feel able to do more; other days even simple tasks may feel difficult. Both are normal. Allow yourself to accept help from others and take things one step at a time.

The following suggestions are offered as gentle guidance. Some may feel helpful right now, while others may not. Everyone's experience of grief is different.

Care for Your Body

Grief often affects sleep, appetite, and energy levels. Paying attention to your physical well-being can help support your emotional healing.

- Try to maintain a simple sleep routine, even if sleep feels difficult at times.
- Eat regular meals when you can. Friends or family may want to help by bringing food—accepting this support can make daily tasks easier.
- Gentle movement such as walking, stretching, or light exercise may help release tension and improve sleep.
- If you feel unwell physically, consider checking in with your healthcare provider.

Accept Help and Stay Connected

Many people feel a strong urge to withdraw after a loss, yet connection with others can be an important source of comfort.

- Allow trusted friends or family members to help with meals, errands, childcare, or household tasks.
- Spend time with people who are able to listen and support you.
- If you feel ready, consider participating in a grief support group where you can connect with others who have experienced loss.

(Resources for support groups are listed in the Support Groups and Additional Resources section of this guide.)

Give Yourself Time Before Making Major Decisions

In the early months after a loss, it can be difficult to think clearly or make complex decisions.

- When possible, try to postpone major life changes such as moving, changing jobs, or making large financial decisions.
- Focus on the most necessary tasks first and allow less urgent decisions to wait.

Create Gentle Routines and Moments of Comfort

During grief, daily life can feel uncertain or disorganized. Simple routines and comforting activities can provide stability.

- Plan small activities that bring comfort, such as walking, listening to music, spending time in nature, or connecting with a supportive friend.
- Some people find it helpful to set aside quiet time to remember the person who died, look at photos, or write about their memories.
- You may also want to plan supportive activities on days you expect may be especially difficult.

(Additional suggestions for navigating Holidays, Anniversaries, and Other Important Dates can be found on the next page.)

Learn About Grief

Many people find it helpful to learn more about grief and how others experience it. Understanding that your reactions are common can reduce feelings of isolation or worry.

You may find comfort in reading books about grief or hearing the stories of others who have experienced loss.

(A list of recommended books is included in the Support Groups and Additional Resources section.)

Be Mindful of Substances

Alcohol, caffeine, and other substances can sometimes make sleep, mood, or stress more difficult to manage during grief.

If you choose to use them, consider doing so in moderation and paying attention to how they affect your body and emotions.

Remember:

During grief, it is easy to be hard on yourself. Try to offer yourself the same patience, understanding, and care that you would give to someone else who is grieving.



Holidays, Anniversaries, and Other Important Dates

Throughout life, certain days carry special meaning—birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, graduations, weddings, and religious observances. These occasions often bring families and communities together, and they may already feel busy or emotionally full.

After the death of someone important to you, these days can feel different. You may notice stronger feelings of grief, sadness, or longing as these dates approach. Many people also feel a sense of anticipation or worry about how they will manage the day.

There is no single “right” way to approach holidays and important dates after a loss. The following ideas may help as you think about what feels most supportive for you.

- **Talk with someone you trust.** As a holiday approaches, consider sharing your thoughts or concerns with a friend or family member. Let them know this time may be difficult for you and allow them to support you.
- **Adjust expectations.** It may help to keep plans simple and give yourself permission to do less than you might normally do. Grief can take a lot of energy.
- **Create new traditions or adapt old ones.** Some people find comfort in continuing familiar traditions, while others prefer to change them. You might choose to honor the person who died by lighting a candle, sharing memories, preparing a favorite meal, visiting a meaningful place, or doing an act of kindness in their memory.
- **Consider different ways of spending the day.** Some people prefer to gather with family or friends, while others choose quieter time alone. You might spend the day in a new setting, take a trip, or volunteer in your community.

- **Be gentle with yourself afterward.** For some people, the days following a holiday can feel especially quiet or empty once gatherings are over. If this happens, know that it is a common experience. Planning a small comforting activity during that time may help.

Over time, many people find their own ways of remembering and honoring their loved one during meaningful dates.

Talking with Others About Your Loss

After the death of someone important to you, conversations with others may feel different than they did before. You may find comfort in talking about the person who died, or you may find it difficult to know what to say. At times you may want support and companionship; at other times you may prefer quiet or privacy.

People around you may also feel unsure about what to say or how to respond. Some may offer thoughtful support, while others may avoid the topic or say things that feel awkward or hurtful. These experiences are common in grief and can sometimes make social interactions feel exhausting.

It may help to remember that you are allowed to share as much or as little about your grief as feels right for you.

Responding to Offers of Help

Friends, family members, coworkers, and neighbors often want to help but may not know what would be most useful.

Some people find it helpful to create a short list of practical ways others can support them.

This might include:

- Bringing meals or helping with errands
- Assisting with childcare or household tasks

- Helping with phone calls, paperwork, or other responsibilities
- Sitting with you, listening, or sharing memories of your loved one
- Taking a walk with you or some other outdoor activity
- Treating you to a cup of coffee, tea, or a meal out

Accepting help from others can ease some of the many responsibilities that often follow a loss.

When People Don't Know What to Say

Even caring people sometimes struggle to find the right words after a death. You may hear comments that feel comforting, awkward, or upsetting.

While these remarks may come from a desire to help, they can sometimes do more harm than good. If a conversation becomes difficult, it is okay to change the subject, step away, or let someone know you are not ready to talk about certain things.

Protecting your time and emotional energy during grief is an important part of caring for yourself.

Returning to Work or Daily Activities

Returning to work, school, or other routines can feel challenging. Some people find that structure and familiar activities provide comfort, while others may need additional time before resuming their usual schedule.

If you are returning to work, you may want to speak with a supervisor or trusted coworker about what feels manageable. It may also help to take short breaks during the day and give yourself permission to adjust gradually as you return to your routine.

Social Media and Grief

Social media can play a complicated role in grief. Some people choose to share news of a death online and find comfort in the support and memories others share. Others prefer to keep their grief more private and rely on in-person conversations.

If you choose to share information about the death online, you may want to consider whether close family members or friends have already been notified. Some people find that posting allows others to express support and helps with sharing information about memorial services.

At the same time, social media can sometimes bring unexpected reminders or emotional reactions. You may find it helpful to:

- Limit how often you check social media during difficult times
- Take breaks from certain platforms or temporarily remove apps from your phone
- Adjust settings to hide accounts or content that feel upsetting

Many people find that social media is helpful at certain times and overwhelming at others. Paying attention to how it affects your emotions can help you decide what feels most supportive.

Managing the Social Media Accounts of Someone Who Has Died

Families sometimes need to decide what to do with the social media accounts of the person who died. Options vary depending on the platform.

Some platforms allow accounts to be **memorialized**, which preserves the profile as a place for friends and family to share memories while preventing anyone from logging into the account. Others allow family members to request that the account be **deleted or deactivated**. Information about requesting changes to a person's account can usually be found in the help or support section of the social media platform.

If you are unsure what to do, it is okay to take time before making these decisions.

Remember:

You do not have to manage every conversation or expectation while you are grieving. It is okay to set boundaries and care for yourself in the ways that feel most supportive.



Helping Grieving Children and Teens

Children and teenagers grieve too, though they may show their grief in ways that look different from adults. Some children ask many questions, while others may return quickly to play or daily activities. Their reactions may come and go over time.

Adults sometimes feel unsure how much to say to children about death. In most cases, children cope better when caring adults speak honestly, offer reassurance, and remain emotionally available.

The following approaches can help support children and teens after a loss.

- **Use clear, simple language.** Words like “died” or “death” help children understand what has happened. Phrases such as “went to sleep” or “passed away” can sometimes be confusing for younger children.
- **Encourage questions and conversation.** Children may ask the same questions many times as they try to understand what has happened. Answering patiently and honestly helps them feel safe.
- **Model emotional expression.** Letting children see that adults also feel sad or miss the person who died can help them understand that grief is a normal response to loss.
- **Maintain familiar routines.** Regular schedules for school, meals, and bedtime help children feel safe and supported during a time of change.
- **Include children in funerals or memorial services if they wish.** Some children find comfort in participating in these rituals. Preparing them in advance for what to expect can help them feel more comfortable.
- **Encourage expression through play, art, or storytelling.** Many children express feelings through drawing, play, or creative activities rather than conversation.

Preschool Children (Ages 3–5)

How They Understand Death

Young children often do not fully understand that death is permanent. They may think the person who died will return or may see death as temporary.

Possible Behaviors

- Asking repeated questions about the person who died
- Clinginess or separation anxiety
- Changes in sleep or toileting habits
- Temporary regression (such as acting younger than their age)
- Moving quickly between sadness and play

How to Help

- Offer short, simple, and clear explanations about what has happened
- Provide extra comfort and reassurance about safety
- Maintain familiar routines whenever possible
- Allow them to express feelings through play, drawing, or stories
- Follow the child’s lead for continuing further conversations
- Keep caregivers, preschool teachers, and other significant adults (faith leaders, extended family) informed about the loss

School-Age Children (Ages 6–12)

How They Understand Death

Children in this age group begin to understand that death is permanent and happens to all living things. They may also become curious about the physical details of death or illness.

Possible Behaviors

- Sadness, anger, or worry
- Difficulty concentrating at school
- Physical complaints such as headaches or stomachaches
- Changes in friendships or school performance
- Interest in talking about the person who died

How to Help

- Answer questions honestly and at a level they can understand
- Encourage them to share memories and talk about their feelings
- Keep teachers, school counselors, and other significant adults (faith leaders, extended family) informed about the loss
- Provide opportunities for physical activity, play, and creative expression

Teenagers (Ages 13–18)

How They Understand Death

Teenagers understand death much like adults do. At the same time, they are navigating important developmental changes and may struggle with strong emotions.

Possible Behaviors

- Intense sadness, anger, or guilt
- Withdrawing from family or spending more time with friends
- Risk-taking behaviors or changes in mood
- Wanting privacy around their feelings
- Reflecting on deeper questions about meaning, life, or fairness

How to Help

- Encourage open conversation while respecting their need for independence
- Listen without judgment and take their feelings seriously
- Maintain consistent expectations and routines when possible
- Offer support from trusted adults such as teachers, counselors, faith leaders or mentors

Remember:

Children and teens often revisit their grief as they grow and reach new stages of development. Continuing to talk about the person who died and keeping their memory present in family life can help young people feel supported over time.



When to Seek Additional Support

Grief can be painful and overwhelming at times. Many people find that support from family, friends, faith communities, or support groups is helpful as they adjust to life after a loss.

At times, additional support from a counselor, healthcare provider, or support organization may also be helpful. Consider reaching out for additional support if you notice:



Tip:

Many hospices, hospitals, faith communities, and counseling centers offer grief support groups. If you are interested in a group near you, checking with local hospices or community resource directories can often be a helpful place to start.

- Feelings of hopelessness or despair that do not ease over time
- Difficulty carrying out daily responsibilities for an extended period
- Persistent sleep problems or loss of appetite
- Intense feelings of guilt or self-blame related to the death
- Using alcohol or substances more often to cope
- Thoughts of wanting to die or harming yourself

Seeking help is a sign of strength. Support from trained professionals or support groups can provide comfort, understanding, and practical tools for navigating grief.

Crisis Support Resources

Resources at Marshall

Marshall Spiritual Care Services

Marshall chaplains are available to provide emotional and spiritual support to patients, families, and community members who are grieving.

530-622-1441 ext. 6028

Local Community Resources

El Dorado County 24-Hour Crisis Line

Provides crisis support for mental health and substance use concerns, and can connect callers with local crisis services.

530-622-3345

Alcoholics Anonymous Hotline

916-454-1100, aasacramento.org

24-Hour National Support

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Call or text **988** for free, confidential support available 24 hours a day.

Veterans' Crisis Line

Dial **988** followed by “#1”

Crisis Text Line

Text **HELLO** to **741741** to connect with a trained crisis counselor by text message

If you are concerned about your immediate safety or the safety of someone else, call 911.

Support Groups and Additional Resources

Many people find it helpful to connect with others who are also grieving. Support groups, counseling, and educational resources can provide understanding, encouragement, and practical tools for coping with loss.

Because support groups and programs sometimes change, the resources below can help you **find current services and reliable information** when you need it.

Local Resources

Snowline Health

Snowline provides grief counseling, support groups, and educational programs for adults, children, and families. Many bereavement services are available to community members, even if their loved one was not a Snowline patient.

snowlinehealth.org

Marshall Social Services

Marshall Social Services maintains a list of grief support groups and counseling resources in the community. An updated list of current programs may be available upon request.

Bereavement Network Resources of Sacramento

A nonprofit organization that maintains a directory of grief support groups, counseling services, and bereavement programs throughout the Sacramento region and surrounding counties.

griefhelpsacramento.com

National and Online Resources

Center for Loss & Life Transition

Educational resources on grief, mourning, and healing developed by grief educator Alan Wolfelt.

The website includes articles, guidance for coping with loss, and materials for supporting others who are grieving.

centerforloss.com

What's Your Grief

An educational website created by grief counselors that offers practical articles, podcasts, and tools to help people better understand and cope with grief.

whatsyourgrief.com

Speaking Grief

A public media initiative that provides videos, articles, and stories that help people understand grief and support those who are grieving.

speakinggrief.org

Hospice Foundation of America

A national nonprofit organization providing education about grief, end-of-life care, and bereavement, including resources for families and caregivers.

hospicefoundation.org

Resources for Children and Teens

The Dougy Center – National Grief Center for Children & Families

A nationally recognized organization that provides grief support resources for children, teens, young adults, and families coping with the death of someone close.

dougy.org

Winston's Wish

An organization dedicated to supporting grieving children and young people through resources for families, caregivers, and professionals.

winstonswish.org

Further Reading

Many people find comfort in reading about the experiences of others who have faced loss. The books below offer reflections, practical guidance, and supportive perspectives on grief and healing.

Books for Adults

It's OK That You're Not OK

Megan Devine

A compassionate and practical book that challenges common myths about grief and offers supportive guidance for living with loss.

Bearing the Unbearable

Joanne Cacciatore

A gentle and reflective guide that combines personal stories, mindfulness practices, and insights about learning to live with profound loss.

Healing After Loss

Martha Whitmore Hickman

A collection of brief daily meditations that many grieving people find helpful for reflection, comfort, and encouragement during the first year after a loss.

A Grief Observed

C.S. Lewis

A short and deeply personal reflection written after the death of the author's wife, exploring the emotional and spiritual questions that can arise during grief.

On Grief and Grieving

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross & David Kessler

An accessible introduction to common emotional responses to loss, including the framework often known as the "five stages of grief".

Books for Children and Teens

The Invisible String — Patrice Karst (*recommended for ages 3–7*)

A gentle picture book that helps young children understand that love keeps people connected even when someone they love is far away or has died.

Healing Your Grieving Heart for Kids — Alan D. Wolfelt (*recommended for ages 7–12*)

A practical book filled with simple activities and ideas that help children express feelings, remember their loved one, and cope with grief.

Straight Talk about Death for Teenagers — Earl A. Grollman (*recommended for ages 13 and older*)

A thoughtful guide written specifically for teenagers that addresses common questions, emotions and challenges experienced after the death of someone close.

Some people find books helpful while grieving, while others prefer to talk with friends, family members, counselors, or spiritual care providers. It is okay to seek support in whatever ways feel most helpful to you.

A Final Note

Grief often changes over time, but the loss of someone important in your life will always remain part of your story. Many people find that while the pain of loss may soften, the love and connection they feel for the person who died continues in new ways.

As you move forward, you may discover ways to remember your loved one, honor their life, and carry their influence with you. This ongoing connection can become an important part of healing.

Please accept our heartfelt sympathy from the physicians, nurses, chaplains, and staff of Marshall.



*We wish you peace and healing
in the days ahead.*



MARSHALL

1100 Marshall Way
Placerville, California 95667
530-622-1441
916-933-CARE (2273)
Toll-free 866-340-1441

marshallmedical.org

