

Grief, loss and trauma

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health includes physical, mental, cultural and spiritual health.

Grief, loss and trauma are common in our communities. People might experience trauma from the impact of mental distress or substance use problems, abuse in any form, or exposure to violence. Some communities are affected by a number of people dying from physical illness and suicide.

Since Colonisation in 1788 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have experienced racism, displacement, had their culture and spiritual values systematically attacked, been targets of genocide policies and practices and had their families destroyed by forced removal of children.

Intergenerational trauma can be passed down across generations. Some families and communities are unable to, or are still working towards, healing the trauma of past events.

It is important to remember that Aboriginal people have a strong and deep history of survival in the face of adversity. Connection to Country and community, strong kinship and spiritual traditions have helped many people overcome painful personal experiences. It's important to remember and grow stories of resilience, strength and creativity in coping with hard times in our communities.

Everyone responds to trauma, grief and loss differently. People who have experienced trauma can feel distress, sadness, grief, shame or anger. Some people use alcohol or other drugs. It is common for people experiencing grief or trauma to have more health problems, such as depression, heart disease or cancers.

Some grief and loss is a part of life, but too much is not good for you. If you feel like you are facing situations in your life that might be too much to cope with on your own, it is important to:

- Remember to talk to someone. You can yarn to your family, friend, or come and talk to us
- Make time to be close to friends, family and community that help you feel safe
- Make healthy life choice, like getting enough sleep, eating health food, or not using substances
- Your GP may also be able to help you find a professional such as a counsellor psychologist to talk to

More information can be found via:

- Your local GP
- Your local Community Health Centre
- Aboriginal Medical Centres
- Australian Indigenous Health InfoNet
healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au