

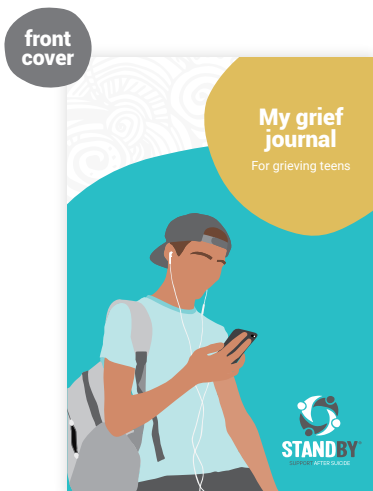


Accompanying notes

My grief journal



These notes have been developed to help those parents/carers support teenagers working through the impact of suicide using the resource 'my grief journal'

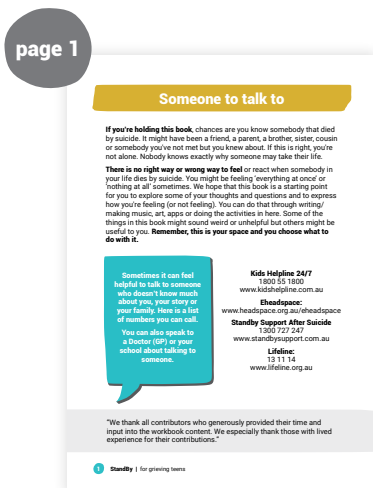


For grieving teens – a grief journal

Generally, teenagers react to and express their grief in diverse ways depending on their personality, age, support systems, culture, and past experiences (Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement, 2015).

It can be useful for teenagers to have a private outlet to express their grief and to identify support and coping options, which is why we created “For grieving teens – a grief journal”.

We hope that these accompanying notes will be a helpful resource for you in supporting your teenager through the impact of suicide by using the journal.



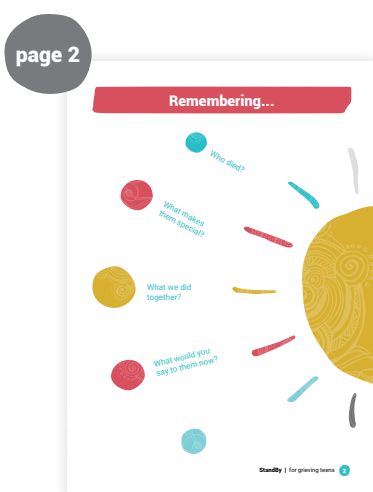
Someone to talk to

Teenagers seek to make sense of the world around them and if a suicide is not discussed with them, they may talk with peers to form their own opinion of what is going on.

There are a few things to remember when talking with teenagers about a suicide:

- Inform the teenager as soon as possible (telling a teenager about suicide should be done by their parent, guardian or someone they trust)
- Discuss the suicide calmly and straightforwardly, without giving graphic details
- Use non-judgemental language, avoid blame, and acknowledge that suicide is complex

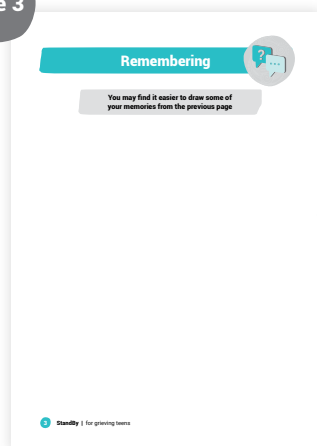
(Be You & BeyondBlue, 2019). We have also included numbers on this page that you may like to call individually or together for support.



Remembering

This activity is designed to help teenagers remember the person who died in different ways. You can help by prompting your teenager to think about the activities they shared together, their relationship and what they might like to say to them. Remembering the person who died is part of the healing process. It reminds teenagers that it is not taboo to talk about the person who died.

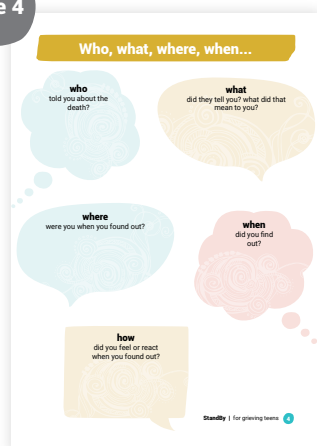
(Suicide Call Back Service, 2019).



Remembering

This is a blank space to allow teenagers freedom to creatively express their answers to the previous page.

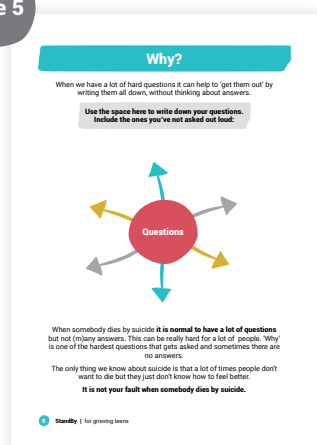
They might like to draw their memories of the person who died, write a poem, or something else creative.



Who, what, where, when...

Teenagers may learn about suicide via media platforms, overheard adult conversations, community or kinship groups, schools or experiencing the loss of loved one who has died by suicide.

This activity may assist them to process what they have learned and begin expressing their feelings.



Why?

It's important that teenagers feel free to talk about the suicide openly and honestly and to ask questions (Mayo Clinic, 2019). As an adult, a couple of the most important things you can do for your child is to let them know that all questions are okay to ask, and to answer questions truthfully. (Suicide Call Back Service, 2019). When someone dies by suicide, those left behind often have many unanswered questions, and often the first question is 'Why?' (Dougy Center, 2019).

This activity is designed to normalise that there may be many unanswered questions after a suicide death, and to help teenagers identify what questions are on their mind, especially the ones that they might not feel they are able to say out loud, yet.



Helping hand

There may be times when the teenager may benefit from talking to others. This activity is designed to help teenagers identify who they feel comfortable to talk to, so that when they need to talk, they know where to turn.

This may be a grandparent, other relative or teacher. It would be useful to prepare these people in understanding what has happened so they can be prepared to support if required (*Conversations Matter, 2019*).

Sometimes teenagers find it useful to speak anonymously to someone. The following are some options:

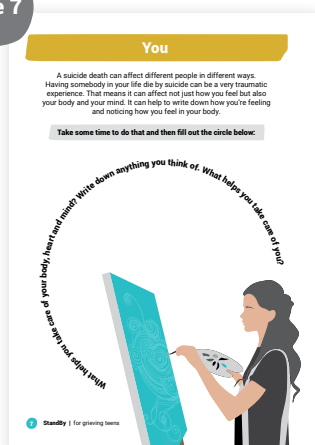
Kids Helpline is a free 24/7 phone and online counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25. Counselling is currently offered by phone or webchat. kidshelpline.com.au/get-help/webchat-counselling

Your teenager may also find eheadspace useful. **eheadspace** provides free online support and counselling to young people aged 5 to 25 and their families and friends: headspace.org.au/eheadspace/

eheadspace also provides group chats with mental health professionals and other young people: headspace.org.au/eheadspace/group-chat/

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teenagers may find the information and stories on **Yarn Safe** helpful: headspace.org.au/yarn-safe/

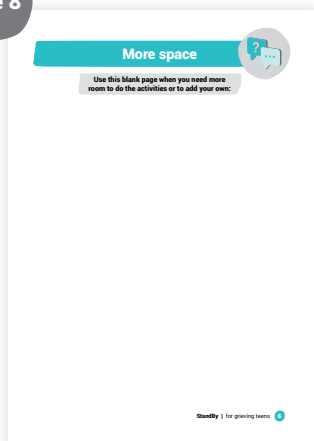
Teenagers who identify as LGBTQI+ may find it useful to seek free telephone or webchat support from **QLife**: qlife.org.au/get-help



You

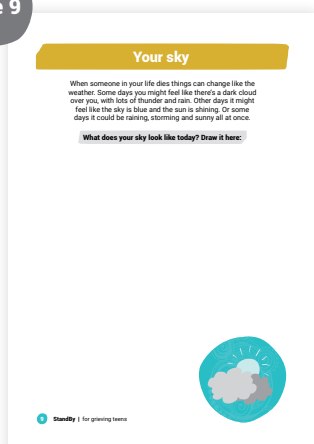
This activity is designed to enable teenagers to express different emotions and feelings in their own words and drawings.

A teenager can go through many emotions and feelings at this time. These can include sadness, relief, disbelief, guilt, frustration, fear, anger, panic, shock, confusion, anxiety, numbness, longing, lack of emotions, etc. (*Dougy Center, 2019*).



More space

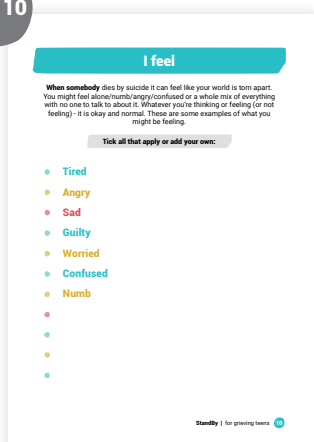
As mentioned previously, teenagers may turn to creativity to express themselves and make sense of their situation. This is another free space to do that.



Your sky

Life can change dramatically after someone in a teenager's life dies, and their world can look very different on a day to day basis (*Dougy Centre, 2018*).

This activity is designed to normalise this and encourage teenager's to express what their feelings and world looks like creatively by using a sky as a metaphor.



I feel

There can be a variety of changes after a suicide death. You might find this activity useful to reflect upon and understand what changes your teenager is experiencing.

Sometimes what your teenager is experiencing may not be obvious, so giving them the opportunity to express the changes can help you understand what is happening for them, and to then be able to assist them and help them feel safe. Children and teenagers need to be reassured that they will be safe and cared for after experiencing a traumatic loss like suicide (*Kids Helpline, 2019*).

Inside - Outside

Sometimes we feel very different on the inside than what we show on the outside.

Use this space to draw:

What I show on the outside

How I feel on the inside

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Inside - Outside

Teenagers may not always show visible reactions. This activity is designed to help them identify how they are feeling. Sometimes it can be difficult to put feelings into words when overwhelmed, so teenagers have the option of drawing their response. Reminding them that it's ok to have feelings and helping them find creative ways to express and manage these feelings is important. (*Suicide Call Back Service, 2019*).

Things that could help

What makes you feel better when you feel sad?

Circle all the things that help, or add your own:

sports or swimming listening to or making music

going to (a place)

time with animals or being outside

planting or building something

drawing or writing

being around friends

making something

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Things that could help

We can often be quick to offer advice and give opinions, which is natural to do when we are worried about someone we love. However, what's most helpful is to listen without judging or advising what might help.

This activity is designed for teenagers to explore and identify what personally helps them to feel better (*Mayo Clinic, 2019*).

What I enjoy

Choose activities you like from the previous page:

Use the space below to write or draw how they made you feel:

The activities I chose

1

2

3

How they made me feel

Keep choosing activities that you enjoy and work for you.

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What I enjoy

Teenagers sometimes feel powerless and out of control in response to the loss and the changes this can create to family's lives as they grieve and school, work, and day to day routines are disrupted. Teenagers can benefit from a daily routine for a sense of security (*Suicide Call Back Service, 2019*).

This activity is designed to help teenagers identify what things they find helpful which may help them regain a sense of power and control.

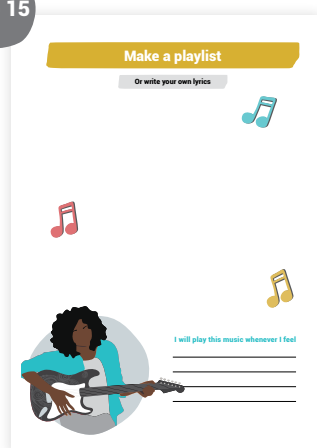


Memories

There are many activities teenagers can do to evoke or symbolise their relationship with the person who died, to remember and talk about their life, and how they were unique and important. A memory box may contain photos, poems, artworks, pressed flowers or other mementos that mean something to the teenager.

This activity is designed to help teenagers express themselves and provide them with their own unique space to feel connected to the person who died.

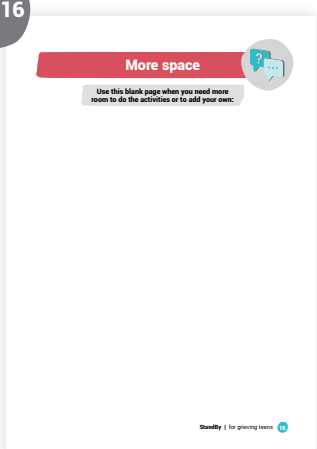
Providing teenagers with the choice of how to remain connected can help them to own their grief and feel more empowered (*Dougy Center, 2019*). It might be useful for you to share your own memories of the person who died eg. "your Mum loved this song".



Make a playlist

This activity is designed to give teenagers and opportunity to express their grief and/or remember the person who died via music and songwriting.

Music, dance and creative art can be an appealing and non-confronting way for some teenagers to express themselves and remain connected to the person who died (*Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement, 2015*).



More space

As mentioned previously, teenagers may turn to creativity to express themselves and make sense of their situation. This is another free space to do that.

Ups and downs

Write, sketch or draw about...

Something you're happy about

Your favourite memory of the person

10 things you want to do in life

What life looks like now

What you would tell someone else going through this

What do you wish you could've said

What you wish you could tell others

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Ups and downs

Suicide is complex and adolescents may experience a range of reactions as they grieve the person who died, across a wide range of emotions (Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement, 2015).

This activity is designed to normalise reactions and emotions, and provide teenagers with an opportunity to reflect on the past, present, and future, and the person who died.

Things people have said

Circle the ones that help, cross out the ones that don't, or add ones you wish they'd say

They're still here with you

They're in a better place now

At least you've still got...

I know how you feel

How are you?

Everything happens for a reason

You must be so strong

You'll be okay

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Things people have said

This activity may be useful for prompting your teenager to think about what words are helpful and unhelpful, and to help them work out what they might need to hear from other people in their life. This may assist them with regaining a sense of control.

Telling other people

It's really hard to talk about death and sometimes people don't know what to say.

When you tell your friends or others about what happened they might say something that upsets you and that can feel pretty horrible.

But telling others can also help!

If you feel you can't say what you'd like in person, you might want to text

What could you say to your friends or others?

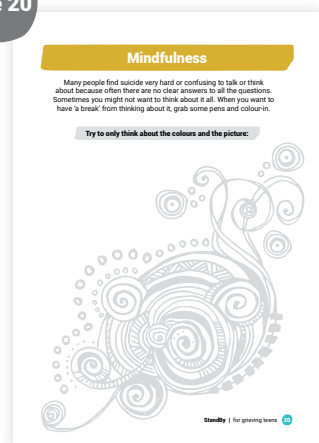
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Telling other people

Don't assume that others will know what has happened. Contact the school and advise them of the death and circumstances before your teenager goes back to school. You may also want to rehearse with the teenager what they will say to their friends or teachers so that they are well prepared.

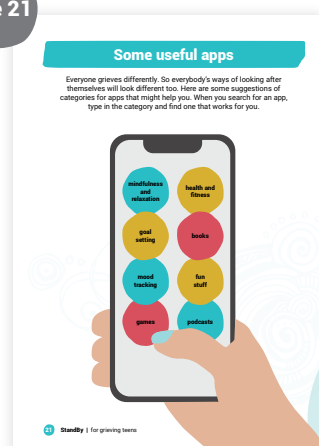
Maintain contact with the teachers and inform them of any anniversary dates or other stressful times (Suicide Call Back Service, 2019), (Mayo Clinic, 2019).

This activity is designed to help teenagers plan and prepare for what they will say to other people, either in person or via text.



Mindfulness

This activity is designed to give teenagers a break from their thoughts by practising mindfulness and focusing on being in the moment as they colour in the picture.



Some useful apps

Many teenagers have access to smartphones and may find apps in the categories on this page useful. If your teenager needs ideas, they might like the following as a starting point:

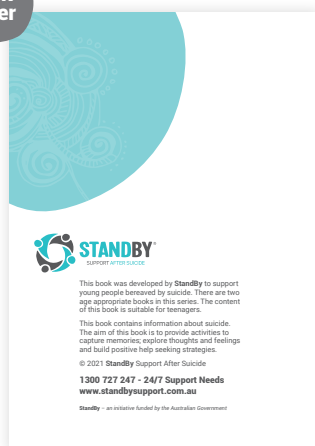
- The Dougy Center has podcasts and short films by and for teenagers who are grieving: www.tdcschooltoolkit.org/teens
- Smiling Mind – Australian mindfulness app offering free mindfulness programs for children and adults



Social media

This activity is designed to allow teenagers to process their own thoughts about social media and to prompt them to think about what they find helpful and unhelpful about it.

For more information on using social media following the death of a young person, you and your teenager might find it useful to read headspace's resources on social media here: headspace.org.au/friends-and-family/social-media-advice-for-families/



Back cover

It can be difficult as a parent or main carer to tend to your teenager's needs when you may be struggling with your own grief. It is vital that you look after yourself and surround yourself with some extra support so that you do not have to go through this alone.

You might find some of these ideas helpful: standbysupport.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Ideas-for-self-care.pdf

References

Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement (2015). Adolescents and grief. www.grief.org.au/uploads/uploads/Adolescents%20and%20Grief.pdf

Be You & Beyond Blue (2019). Suicide Response Resources – Supporting young people after a suicide. beyou.edu.au/-/media/pdfs/suicide-prevention-and-response/suicide_response_factsheet_supporting_young_people_after_a_suicide_4mb.pdf

Conversations Matter (2019). Conversations Matter when telling a child about suicide. www.conversationsmatter.com.au/resources-community/telling-a-child-about-suicide

Dougy Center (2018). School and Community Toolkit – Teens. www.tdcschooltoolkit.org/teens

Dougy Center (2019). Supporting Children and teens after a suicide death. www.dougy.org/docs/TDC_Supporting_Children_Teens_After_a_Suicide_Death_2018.pdf

headspace (2020). Social media advice – for families. headspace.org.au/friends-and-family/social-media-advice-for-families/

Kids Helpline. (2019). Supporting a child through grief and loss. kidshelpline.com.au/parents/issues/supporting-child-through-grief-and-loss

Mayo Clinic (2019). Suicide grief: Healing after a loved one's suicide. www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/end-of-life/in-depth/suicide/art

Suicide Call Back Service (2019). Helping and supporting children mourning a loss by suicide: SCBS. www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au/resource/supporting-children-bereaved-suicide/



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