



# Info-Link Sheet

## Managing Change, Grief & Loss

### Women's Information and Referral Service

1800 817 227

Older Women Out There is a wellness project for women living in rural and remote areas. It is coordinated by NSW Agriculture's Rural Women's Network and funded by the NSW Department of Health

*'When it is dark enough,  
you can see the stars.'*

~ Charles A. Beard

Grief is the normal response to loss of any kind.

There are many kinds of loss, often associated with changes in our lives. Some are called 'developmental losses'. We've all experienced these – toddlers leaving mum to go to a baby sitter, children leaving behind one stage of school and moving onto the next, young people leaving their families to marry or travel or work.

Any of our life choices may involve a certain amount of compromise. Very often there is a 'hard to put your finger on it' sense of loss.

Other losses we may face are the death of friends and loved ones, becoming unemployed, losses caused by problems such as alcoholism or domestic violence, perhaps losing our hopes and dreams, or losing our health and physical capabilities through illness or age...and as night follows day, so grief follows loss.

Grief is a **process**. That means that, like any other process, **it takes time** to work through it. It is **normal** for a grieving person to experience any of the following:

- \* Sadness
- \* Anxiety
- \* Anger
- \* Guilt
- \* Relief

More often than not, our bodies will reflect the way we are feeling. Some of these physical reactions can be quite new to us, so may be a source of anxiety. The most common physical reactions are;

- \* a strange hollowness in the stomach
- \* feeling tight in the chest
- \* your throat feels restricted
- \* noise drives you mad ('Turn that TV DOWN!')
- \* feeling 'spaced out', not with it at all
- \* you can become breathless
- \* a weakness of your muscles
- \* lack of energy
- \* a dry mouth.

The information below describes the different stages we can go through in dealing with change and

loss. Each of us may experience these stages in a different order, to a greater or lesser degree, or skip some stages entirely. That's OK - there are no rules.

What then falls into the class of 'abnormal'? An abnormal reaction is one in which the survivor is unable to progress through the stages but becomes stuck at a particular phase, such as denial, possibly for years.

### CHANGE/LOSS

1. Denial - Inability to believe, shock
2. Release – Acute distress, crying, sighing, breathing changes, sadness
3. Restlessness – Loss of sleep, loss of appetite, changes of habit
4. Isolation – Alienation, withdrawal
5. Remorse (real or unreal) – 'If only...', guilt
6. Panic – Can't think, can't do usual tasks



7. Difficulty planning – Making decisions
8. Anger – Hostility, Resentment
9. Idealisation – How good it all was before loss
10. Vulnerability – Anniversaries, the odd reminder of loss
11. Acceptance – of the situation, and ability to make new plans
12. Hope and confidence –  
Renewed strength and energy
13. ACCEPTANCE

***'If we do not change our direction, we'll end up where we're headed.'***  
~ Chinese proverb.

When you are in an uncomfortable situation, you always have choices. You can choose to do nothing, and simply ACCEPT the situation. This means putting your energy into getting on with things, instead of focussing on the negatives. Or you can choose to LEAVE the situation. However difficult it is, you gather yourself together and you walk away. Or you can CHANGE the situation. We are all part of a system. Unless something changes, all elements within the

system will continue to behave as they have in the past. The cost of change, the price of getting what you want, is the pain and discomfort of changing. It isn't easy to learn new behaviours, to let go of what you know and take on the challenge of the unknown.

Assistance in the change process is beneficial, and often advisable. We're happy to go to a doctor to mend a broken leg but what about broken hearts and dreams? People who have listening or counselling skills and who can help include friends, ministers and priests, social workers, psychologists, community health workers and doctors.

***'When it all seems too much, just take a day at a time.'***

***'When that seems too much, just take an hour at a time.'***

***'When that seems too much, just take a minute at a time – and you will get there.'***

## Support Services

Crisis Care 13 1611

Lifeline 13 1444

Country Care Link 1800 806 160

*Women's Information and Referral Service* 1800 817 227

*Community Health Centres* (listed in the White Pages under NSW Government, Health Department of NSW)

*Counselling services* (listed under Counselling in the Yellow Pages)

*Solutions for everyday living* [www.planet-therapy.com/](http://www.planet-therapy.com/). This site provides practical advice on dealing with anxiety, illness, and depression in a safe, easy to access therapy environment.

*Thinking of Leaving the Family Farm?*

This A4, double sided information sheet provides support and guidance to help you deal with the stress of leaving the farm. To obtain a copy, contact your nearest Rural Counsellor.

*This information sheet has been compiled by NSW Agriculture's Rural Women's Network as part of the Older Women Out There project. For more information contact the Rural Women's Network on 02 6391 3620, fax 02 6391 3650, Email [allison.windus@agric.nsw.gov.au](mailto:allison.windus@agric.nsw.gov.au)*

