

# Natural disasters and grief



Natural disasters are becoming more common in Australia due to the effects of climate change. When a community is devastated by a natural disaster, it's not just the weather event that negatively affects you but everything that surrounds it. Moments like the lead-up, negotiating support extended from the government, helping your community, the clean-up, the waiting, and the residual fear can be as distressing as the event itself.

## Coping with grief after a natural disaster

### Connect with others

Reaching out to speak with someone who has experienced the same thing as you, whether they're in your community or somewhere else, can make you feel less alone. Supporting someone else can be helpful for your healing process too.

### Look after yourself

In the aftermath of a disaster, it can be difficult to let yourself relax, especially if there's still work to be done. But it's important to look after yourself. Get plenty of sleep, make sure you're eating well and often, and move around if you're not already doing so. As well as caring for your physical health, mindfulness practices like guided meditations can help to bolster your mental health.

### Find order

When everything around you is out of control, it can be comforting to create structure and order for yourself. Go to sleep and rise at the same time every day, eat meals at even intervals, and try to make time for the activities and rituals you previously enjoyed. Taking back control of the small things can help you accept the things that aren't in your control.

### Talk about it

When you're grieving a loss, such as the loss of a home, community, or sense of security, you can expect to feel a wide range of emotions, including some that may not be easy to handle. Seeking help from family, friends, or professionals and talking about your feelings is a good way to navigate loss. Talking about what you're experiencing early in your recovery can also make the process easier.

### No big decisions

It's important to let yourself heal, rest, and recover before you make any big decisions or life changes. Even under the best circumstances, making big changes in your life brings with it feelings of uncertainty and fear of the unknown. Focus on resetting your life before you make any big changes.

## Support is available

If you want help navigating your feelings, you can always call the free helpline on **1300 845 745**. Trained Griefline volunteers are available to work with you on all aspects of your loss. You can also connect with others who understand on the Griefline forums at [griefline.org.au/forums](https://griefline.org.au/forums)