

# Suicide Response Resources

*Suicide in schools: information  
for Aboriginal and Torres  
Strait Islander families*



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# Suicide in schools: Information for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families

*You might have heard a suicide has occurred at your young one's school*

## **The suicide of a young one is a very sad and difficult time**

It affects students, the school staff, families and the community. Here's some useful information that can help you and your young one through this difficult time.

## **How young ones may respond**

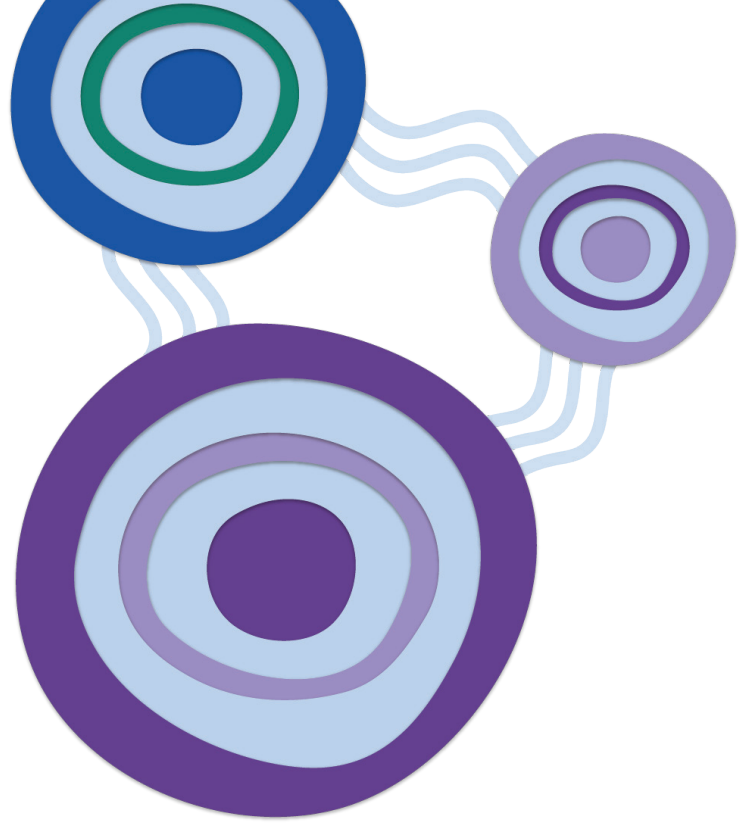
### **Young people respond to the suicide of a young person in lots of different ways**

You may notice that they experience times when they are:

- confused
- cranky or angry
- fearful of death or dying
- feeling guilt
- in denial about the death
- feeling betrayed or abandoned
- hurt
- sad and weak in spirit
- avoiding the things they usually enjoy
- spending less time with family and friends
- longing for country or home.

Your young one's response may be influenced by their personality, their relationship with the deceased person, what is happening in their life, past experiences and their ability to adjust to change. It's different for everyone—some reactions can happen weeks, months or a year after an event. Young ones need opportunities to express how they feel in safe and helpful ways. They may need extra support during this time and could benefit from having a yarn about how they're feeling. Family yarning and storytelling about cultural ways, spirituality and Sorry Business is an important part of their grieving. Be guided by the young one's need to yarn and make sure they understand that the family is there to support them.

Young ones who have experienced difficult times in their lives may find it harder to cope. They may stay away from everyone and want space, or they may be cranky one minute then really happy the next. This could be confusing for them and the family, but it's part of them expressing how they feel. It's important that the people who support the young one are aware of the death so they can offer their support and care.



## Practical ways you can support a young one who's grieving following a suicide

While many young ones will deal with their grief in their own time, there are a range of things you can do to help and support them:

- Let your young one have some time out if they need it—they don't need to be with you all the time.
- Don't yarn about the method and other distressing details about the passing of the loved one.
- Encourage them to keep participating in enjoyable activities (such as footy, fishing or camping) and yarn with them about how they can express their grief through dance, storytelling, artwork and connecting with Elders.
- Encourage contact with supportive family and friends.
- Encourage them to get back to their regular routine of sleeping, healthy eating, doing things with family and friends as well as staying connected with Elders.
- Help your young one to find other ways of dealing with problems by supporting them to reflect on connection with culture and how this can help with healing their spirit.

### What else can you do?

Your young one may have a lot of questions. Yarning about the details of how the loved one passed on may not be helpful and could weaken their spirit. Where possible, when your young one brings it up, yarn about all the ways they can stay positive and strong in spirit. This could include yarning with family members, Elders, relatives, friends, teachers or a counsellor. It can also help to yarn with someone at the school about the difficulties your young one may be experiencing.

### Encourage young ones to support each other

Traditionally during these sad times, all the family and friends come together. Young ones sometimes share their feelings about death with each other and will often go off and yarn about the suicide. Make sure they know to tell a trusted adult right away if they're worried about a friend or family member.

## How you can help your community to heal

After a suicide death, there's lots of yarning about it in the community. Community discussion of suicide can help everyone to start their healing journey. It can help community members feel connected to culture and the community, while this collective strength can help others to heal.

Too much talk about the detail of the suicide however could further weaken a young one's spirit, so it's important to find a balance in these yarns. Some people may decide not to get involved in these yarns to protect their family.

By encouraging positive actions through yarning and community support, you can support young ones to heal and strengthen their spirit.

## Other resources

**Be You** has a range of resources to help you manage issues related to suicide. Please see:

**Grief:** how young people respond to suicide

**Remembering a young person:** memorials and important events in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

**Suicide in schools:** information for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families

## Where can families and young ones get more information and help?

Local services include Aboriginal Medical Services, community clinics, as well as local Elders.

The **Beyondblue support service** provides support any time of the day or night. To talk with a trained mental health professional, please call 1300 22 4636.

**eheadspace** provides online counselling and telephone support to young people aged 12 to 25. Go to [eheadspace.org.au](http://eheadspace.org.au) or contact on 1800 650 890.

**headspace** centres provide support, information and advice to young people aged 12 to 25. For locations and other information, go to [headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au).

**Lifeline** (13 11 14) can provide support 24 hours a day.

**Suicide Callback Service** can provide support to people who are suicidal, have lost someone to suicide or are supporting someone who is suicidal: 1300 659 467.

