



Grief, Loss & Culture

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Grief and Loss

TYPES OF LOSS

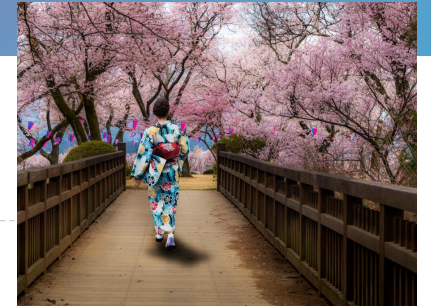
- Separation of parents and family or friendship breakup
- Shifting house or relocating
- Illness or disability
- Natural disaster and forced displacement
- Loss of culture
- Adoption, permanent or kinship care
- LBGTQI, gender and non recognition

IMPACT

- Depends on disruption and how sudden or unexpected
- Individual and inter-generational
- **Grief is an unavoidable spontaneous response to loss. Universal. Experienced uniquely.**

SIGNS

- Look for headaches, nausea, disrupted sleep, lack of concentration and physical health complaints
- Obvious signs may include sadness, crying, anxiety, having bad dreams, angry irritable, lacking motivation, risk taking, acting out
- Grief may be immediate or delayed and may be personal and private or shared with supporting others



Grieving: The Response to Loss

TYPES

- Shock
- Bargaining
- Regression (bed wet)
- Guilt
- Anger
- Anxiety and Depression
- Reconstruct
- Acceptance and Hope

ACKNOWLEDGE

- Focus on helping them feel heard
- Make eye contact, don't interrupt, withhold advice, paraphrase and ask gentle questions
- Let them know you are sorry for their loss and that you care and normalise their feelings
- Ask how they are and how you can help

DON'T

- Tell them not to cry
- Rush them into getting on with life
- Say At Least, You Should, You Will or use platitudes like he is in a better place now

Adoption

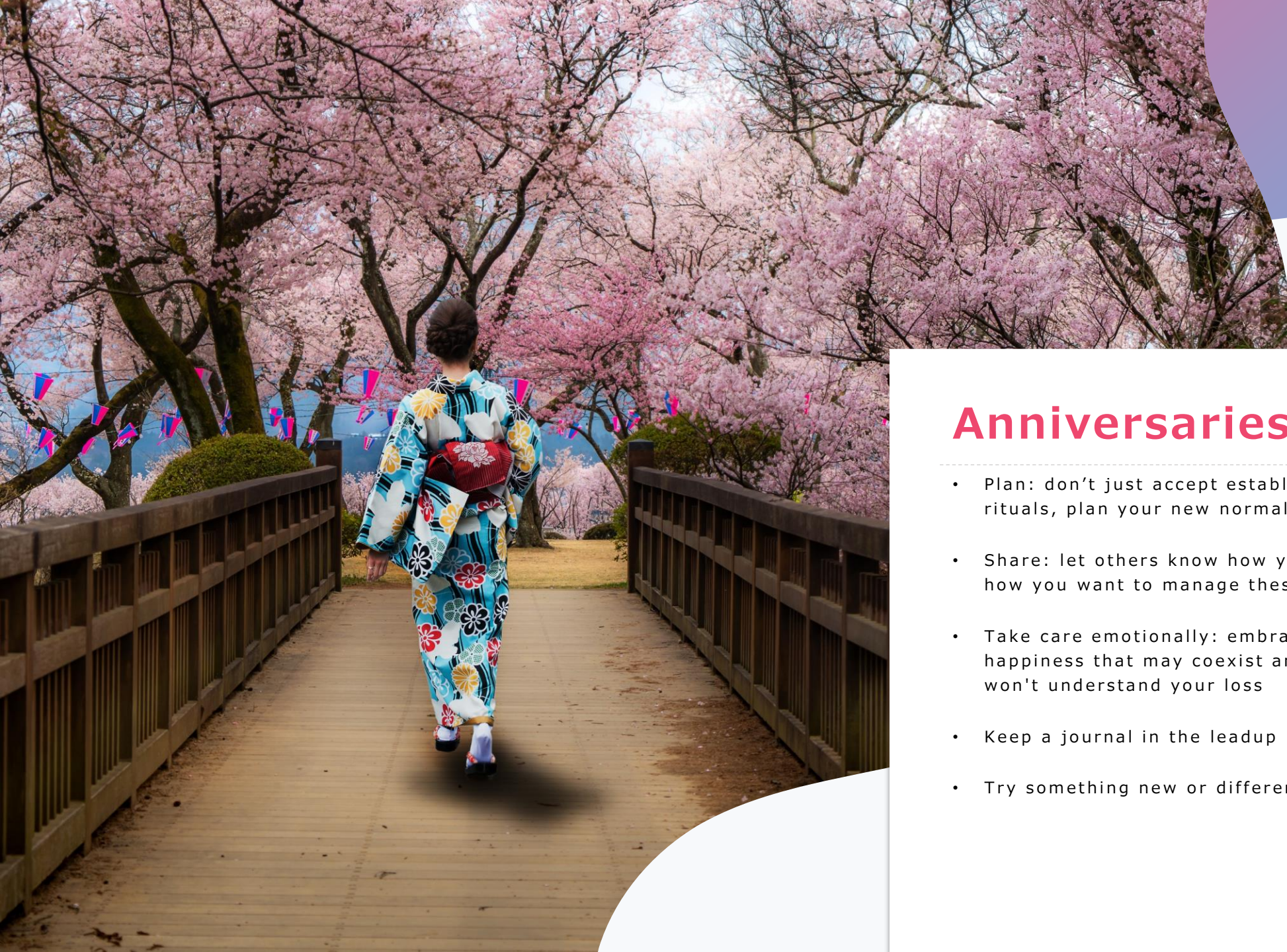
LOSS OF FAMILY, CULTURE, FRIENDS, NEIGHBOURS, FOODS, SMELLS, CAREGIVERS

**LOSS MUST BE ACKNOWLEDGED AND
GRIEVED TO HEAL AND TO FORM
HEALTHY ATTACHMENTS**



NEEDS

- Commonly questioning why they were relinquished
- Adaptive grieving 8-10yo as cognitively they understand their situation
- Pain and fantasy, pleasure and pain
- Concerns re permanence in their adoptive families
- Disenfranchised loss (a loss not openly acknowledged, mourned or supported) can come with waves throughout the life span
- Emotional, behavioural and developmental affects
- Adoption competent therapy, including family therapy and Therapeutic Life Story Work, books and adoptive support groups can help



Anniversaries & Events

- Plan: don't just accept established traditions and rituals, plan your new normal
- Share: let others know how you will be challenged and how you want to manage these events
- Take care emotionally: embrace the sadness and happiness that may coexist and avoid people that won't understand your loss
- Keep a journal in the leadup
- Try something new or different or creative in memory

Young Minds

Young people's advice to Young Minds for those who are grieving:

- 1/ Take one day at a time
- 2/ There is no one way to grieve
- 3/ It's okay to be angry
- 4/ There's no shame in having a big reaction
- 5/ It's okay to feel nothing
- 6/ It's okay not to be okay
- 7/ It's okay to reach out for help
- 8/ Don't feel guilty for having fun
- 9/ You're not alone



Culture

- Talk about adoption, permanent or kinship care from day one and wonder about the history together
- Display artwork from your child's birth country or family around the house, not just their room and celebrate their birth country
- Include play items and books with cultural relevance eg a doll that looks like your child
- Offer options: music, dance, food, camps and remain flexible
- Find and maintain a birth connection to help with identity in the teen years
- Find a community for your child so they have people around them that look like them
- Children in care who are supported to maintain a connection to their culture, religion and language are able to develop their sense of belonging and identity and therefore have better outcomes as they grow up. [Source](#)



Divorce & Separation

COMMUNICATING

- Make clear you are both continuing to parent
- Make clear arrangements for moving, without blaming or despair, and keep changeovers brief
- Listen to questions and concerns
- Invite them to come to you at any time
- Use a communication book with the other parent

SUPPORT

- Share that you are sad or upset with your children while reassuring them that you will recover from those big emotions
- Seek adult support for those big emotions
- Tell friends and family that big issues such as finances are not for children's ears
- Involve professionals or mediators if needed

Death or Suicide

- Children may not have the language or cognition to understand or may see it as temporary
- Explain that the persons life is over and the persons body doesn't work anymore
- Ask them to repeat their understanding
- Validate their sadness or share your own feelings
- Acknowledge confusion and uncertainty
- If anger is expressed, a preoccupation with safety for others may result
- Make known your availability for conversation or hugs and look for 1 on 1 time

Pets

Find a way to remember their pet and say goodbye eg a drawing or a small ceremony



Kids Helpline

www.kidshelpline.com.au

Get Help



**Australian
Centre for
Grief and
Bereavement**

[www.grief.org
.au](http://www.grief.org.au)

Feel the Magic Camps

[www.feelthemagic.org
.au](http://www.feelthemagic.org.au)

Resources

- <https://beyou.edu.au/fact-sheets/grief-trauma-and-critical-incidents/supporting-children-and-young-people-affected-by-grief>
- <https://www.grief.org.au/uploads/uploads/GriefAnniversariesSignificant%20Events.pdf>
- https://aged.grief.org.au/AgedCare/Fact_Sheets/Fact_Sheets.aspx
- <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/adopt-parenting/helping/>
- <https://www.pactadopt.org/resources/grief-and-loss-in-adoption.html>
- <https://www.adoptioneastmidlands.org.uk/media/lrzio4sl/adaptivegrieving.pdf>

- https://aged.grief.org.au/AgedCare/Fact_Sheets/Docs/Grieving_when_your_loss.aspx
- <https://tgn.anu.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Protecting-children-from-unnecessary-trauma-during-separation-and-divorce.pdf>
- <http://tgn.anu.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Supporting-your-child-through-grief-and-loss.pdf>
- <http://tgn.anu.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/petloss.pdf>
- [QLD Grief & Loss for Children in Care.pdf](#)
- [Maintaining cultural connection](#)