

WELCOME TO

Grief Matters

Happy New Year from the Grief Centre!

We're back after the holidays, refreshed and ready to dive into an exciting year ahead. With new training topics, resources, and plans to expand community support, we're looking forward to what this year will bring.

In this month's newsletter:

- **Meet Julie Blakelock-Smith:** An inspiring Grief Companion and Counsellor.
- **Start 2025 stress free:** Create a free will easily with Gathered Here.
- **Explore new resources:** From grief journals to quirky insights like the top 20 slang terms for "kicking the bucket."
- **Thank you to our funders:** Your support makes our work possible.

Here's to a wonderful year ahead!

Ngā mihi nui,

The Grief Centre Team 🌻

*"Those we love don't go away, they walk beside us every day.
Unseen, unheard but always near, still loved, still missed,
and very dear."*

- Anonymous



Meet the Team Spotlight

JULIE BLAKELOCK-SMITH

Counsellor and Grief Companion

Julie joined the Grief Centre in 2020 as a Bereavement Support Worker (Grief Companion) and expanded her role to include counselling in 2021. She is committed to helping people navigate their grief journey, bringing both empathy and a wealth of experience to her work.

At the end of last year, Julie moved to Christchurch to be closer to her two daughters, their husbands, and five of her eight grandchildren. From her new home, she continues to provide counselling and grief support, offering her clients the same care and dedication she's known for.

Born in Auckland in the late 1950s, Julie grew up in the West Auckland suburb of Te Atatū Peninsula, affectionately known as "Tat North." A proud 'Westie,' her childhood was filled with gymnastics and ballroom dancing, hobbies she loved deeply.

Julie's life has been shaped by both challenges and triumphs. She married at 19, became a mother at 24, and experienced a stroke that same year. Six years later, she welcomed her second daughter and soon after navigated life as a solo mum.

A long-standing fascination with psychology and people-care led Julie to a six-year part-time study programme in counselling, social work, and community development. Her passion became a fulfilling career, with 13 years at the Salvation Army and later at Hope Unlimited, where a colleague introduced her to the work of the Grief Centre.

Julie finds balance and joy in simple pleasures—spending time at the beach, being surrounded by nature, catching up with friends over coffee, and enjoying music and laughter. She feels privileged to be part of the Grief Centre whānau and values the opportunity to contribute to its mission. Julie's warmth, dedication, and compassion continue to leave a lasting impact on everyone she supports.

Hear what Julie's clients say about the incredible impact of her work:

"There has been one constant source of support and empathy since ... died, your grief counsellor, Julie. Many times I felt so isolated and lonely. In those times I knew that Julie would call, at the end of the month, and I could talk to her about my feelings, about my challenges, and know that she listened and cared. Julie has helped me to move forward, and I am so grateful for her understanding and advice."

"Time has passed both slowly and quickly—it has been more than six months now since ...'s death. I am deeply grateful for Julie's help and counselling and wanted to let you know just how important she has been in my coping with my grief."

Important dates

WHAT'S COMING UP AT GRIEF CENTRE



27 January 10.00am: **Monday walking group Birkenhead**

1 February: Professional Development schedule opens -
see what's on [here](#)

From 5 February: **10.30am-12pm weekly Wednesday
drop-in group in Birkenhead begins.**

A New Year, A New You

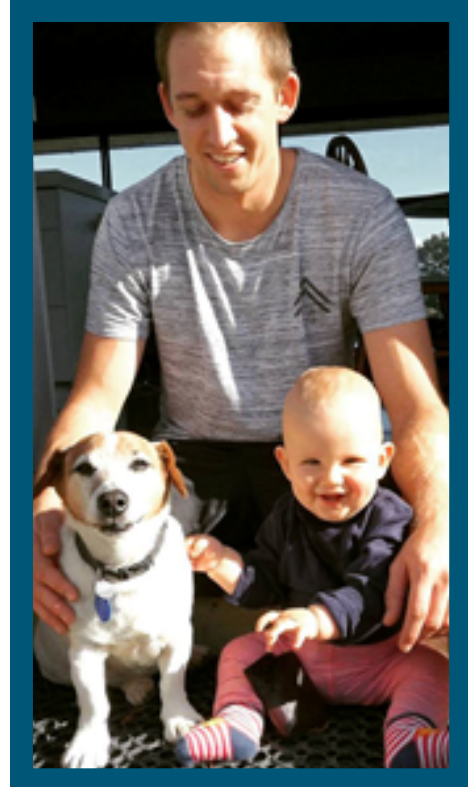
TIME TO PLAN AHEAD AND MAKE A WILL

Having a will can save your loved ones unnecessary stress, yet only half of New Zealanders have one.

To help, we've partnered with Gathered Here to offer a free, easy-to-use online will service.

The process is simple, secure, and ensures your wishes are clearly outlined. Once completed, just sign and witness it to make it legally binding.

You'll also have the option to include a gift to the Grief Centre, helping us continue our vital work—though there's absolutely no obligation to do so.



Create your free will



We Need Your Support

We are a charitable trust, but we don't receive government funding and rely on the generosity of organisations and individuals in our community to support our work. If you can help, please visit our 'Get Involved' page.



Fundraise for us



Donate to us



Leave a gift in your will



Sponsor us



Volunteer for us



Donate to us via work

Discover the latest in resources and media



See the NZ Herald article on the impact of loss during the festive season

An article about our recent research which sheds light on the profound impact of loss and grief on Kiwis includes that one in two have experienced the death of a family member in the last two years.

[Find out more here](#)



Public Trust reveals “kick the bucket” as NZ’s preferred euphemism for death

A new survey reveals the extent New Zealanders will go to actively avoid talking about death, and our preference to use humour and euphemisms like "kick the bucket" and "carked it" when describing death.

[Find out more here](#)

Growing through Grief

A GUIDED JOURNAL BY SARAH ROBB

Whether you're navigating loss or grief, know someone who is, or want to gift something meaningful to a friend, this journal can be a supportive companion along the way.

It offers a safe space for reflection, healing, and growth, guiding you to process your feelings in a compassionate and loving way.

[Find out more here](#)



Thank you to our recent funders



A. K. Franks Charitable Trust

Thank you for subsidising loss and grief counselling sessions for individuals in the Whangārei, Kaipara and Rodney districts.



Four Winds Foundation

Thank you for contributing towards our mission delivery costs by helping to fund the wages of our Clinical Coordinator.



Constellation Communities Trust

Thank you for covering the cost to print newly-designed A5 'Loss After Grief' booklets.

What our clients say

"These sessions have been invaluable to me as it is the one time I don't have to be 'strong' and can let my grief show and work through the thoughts and feelings I'm experiencing in a very safe space where I feel heard, understood and supported. I am thankful that this service has been available to me as I would not have attended counselling if it hadn't been free."

January's Guidance for Grief Support

Remember...

- Grief is personal and individual.
- There is no timetable. Everyone grieves differently and in their own time. Be patient and kind to yourself. The grief journey takes as much time as you need.
- Even though it may not feel like it at first there are gifts in grief. We often learn what's really important and connect in a new way with the world.



Thank you to all our wonderful volunteers, funding partners and supporters who provide the Grief Centre with funding and other resources to ensure we can support New Zealand communities living through loss.



Contact and Alternative Support Numbers

Counselling, Support Groups & General Enquiries

Phone: 09 418 1457
 Freephone: 0800 331 333
 Email: admin@griefcentre.org.nz
 Physical Address:
 97 Birkenhead Avenue
 Birkenhead Auckland 0626
 Postal Address:
 PO Box 34548
 Birkenhead Auckland 0746

Charities Registration Number CC38713

Grief Centre is not a crisis service.

Other assistance and support available includes:

Lifeline (24/7 free helpline) 0800 LIFELINE (5433 5463)
 Text to talk 1737 (free phone counselling)
 Youthline 0800 376 633
 Suicide Crisis Helpline 0508 828865

If you have serious concerns about a person's immediate safety (or your own) please call: 111

Te Whatu Ora's Urgent Response Team (numbers vary around New Zealand, in Auckland it is 0800 800 717)

