

Seasons for Life

Strengthening mental health through loss and grief education



A fully funded, evidence-based initiative for Australian high schools, with the aim of 'upstream' youth suicide prevention.

Seasons for Life builds on 27 years' experience implementing the highly successful Seasons for Growth suite of loss and grief programs, which strengthen young people's resilience to adapt well to change, loss and grief in their lives. The approach is educative, increasing understanding of loss and grief, building social and emotional coping skills, and strengthening supportive relationships. Substantial evidence suggests such an approach is integral to positive mental health and suicide prevention.

Seasons for Life is a national initiative funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care (2022-25) under the National Suicide

Prevention Leadership and Support Program. It is available at no cost to high schools across Australia.

Seasons for Life: Four components, one wraparound initiative

Schools can choose to benefit from one, more or all four components.

1. Seasons for Growth: Young People's Program

Seasons for Growth is a small-group loss and grief education program facilitated by a trained adult Companion. The program comprises eight x 1 hr sessions (plus one celebration session). Through a sound curriculum structure and a range of age-appropriate, creative activities young people:

- Learn about the grief process
- Strengthen emotional literacy
- Develop skills for coping, problem solving, decision making and goal setting
- Identify support networks
- Build self-confidence and self-esteem.

Through the Seasons for Life initiative, schools can access fully funded training for staff to become accredited Companions of the Seasons for Growth Children and Young People's Program. This allows schools to routinely offer the program, supporting young people to adapt well to a wide range of losses, such as parental separation and divorce,



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bereavement, out of home care experiences, parental incarceration and migration. In addition to the Seasons for Growth training, the Seasons for Life initiative includes an added component on facilitating groups following suicide loss in the community.

2. Parent and Carer Session

The Seasons for Growth suite includes a Parent Program. This helps parents and carers build on the learning in the children and young people's program with their child at home. As part of the Seasons for Life initiative, a new component of the parent/carer program has been developed – 'Supporting young people following a suicide loss in the community'. This is a single learning session of 1.5h duration, which is delivered onsite in schools. In the session, parents and carers learn:

- Why loss and grief can be a challenge for young people
- How suicide loss impacts on young people
- Worden's Tasks of Grief in the Seasons for Growth programs
- What parents can do to support their children
- Why quality relationships and communication are important.

Funding is available to train and support school staff to deliver this session for parents and carers. This is intended to strengthen wraparound support for students following suicide loss, including supporting parent-child relationship building and communication.

3. Seasons for Life: Keeping Spirit Strong Resources

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in Australia are at higher risk of suicide and of experiencing suicide loss. Their loss and grief, as well as their resilience, needs to be understood in the context of ancestral and on-going losses and supported in culturally responsive ways that recognise Aboriginal ways of being, knowing and doing. The Seasons

for Life initiative incorporates culturally co-developed materials which offer staff opportunities to develop cultural knowledge and understandings, build confidence, skills and attitudes. Staff can then offer culturally safe and appropriate support through relationships, hard-copy/digital resources and through links to external existing supports. This also includes a 90 minute staff session created for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school staff, Wellbeing, Pastoral Care staff and/or school leadership exploring how schools can provide support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families experiencing loss and grief.

4. Staff Professional Learning Session

Young people can experience grief following a wide range of changes and losses in their lives. Teachers often see the impacts on student wellbeing, behaviour and performance, but can feel uncertain about how best to offer support.

Through the Seasons for Life initiative, a team of State Coordinators are available to deliver a professional learning workshop to upskill staff in understanding and recognising loss and grief and how best to support students, including in the context of suicide loss.

Get in touch

To find out more about the Seasons for Life initiative please e-mail seasonsforlife@mackillop.org.au and a Seasons for Life Coordinator will contact you.