

STORIES OF CARE

Moving Through Grief, Together

When Darren reached out to Kemp Care Network, he was trying to understand how to carry several losses at once.

He had lost his grandfather, who he describes as being like a second father to him. His partner had also lost her mother, someone Darren had lived with for several years and saw as another parental figure.

"I didn't really know how to deal with it," Darren said. "I just kind of knew that I needed help."

His partner had already connected with Gabriele, KCN's Adult Bereavement Support Manager, for one-on-one grief counselling and later joined the Parent Loss Group. After hearing about the support she was receiving, Darren decided to reach out too.

He said he felt comfortable with Gabriele right away.

"Especially as a man, there's that whole stigma of not showing your emotions and opening up," Darren said. "She was very welcoming and made me feel like that was a very safe space that I could do that without judgement."

Darren later joined the Parent Loss Group with his partner. During the group, another loss happened in his family. Having a place to talk, listen and be with others who understood grief became an important part of his support.

"The group support really helped me realize that I'm really not alone in this," he said.

For Darren, the group offered connection and perspective. It helped him see that while grief can feel isolating, there can be comfort in knowing others are also trying to find their way through loss.

The one-on-one counselling gave him something different. It helped him name what he was feeling and say things out loud that had been sitting in his mind.

"Once you vocalize things, it feels so much better to actually get it out than to just constantly be in your mind about the same thing over and over again," he said.

Darren also learned tools he still uses, including journaling and ways to calm himself during difficult moments.

He and his partner are now taking time to focus on healing before moving ahead with wedding plans. It is not because they have stopped looking forward. It is because they want to enter that next chapter with care for themselves and for each other.

"We have to get better first so that we can fully invest ourselves into each other again," Darren said.

When asked what he would say to someone unsure about reaching out for grief support, his answer was simple.

"Do it," he said. "The fact that you're thinking about it shows that you need it."

Darren especially hopes more men feel able to ask for support.

"Talking about things and being vulnerable may not seem like the most masculine thing you can do, but at the end of the day, that's becoming a better man," he said.

For Darren, grief is not something that disappears. It is something he is learning to carry with support, honesty and space to talk about the people he has lost.

"Grief will never leave you because it's love for that person that still has nowhere to go," he said. "But it is so worth it to get help."

If you or someone you know is grieving, support is available. Kemp Care Network offers grief and bereavement support at no cost to individuals and families in our community.

Learn more: www.kempcarenetwork.org/grief-bereavement-programs/adult-grief-support

