

# Good Grief



Words by Jesse Neill

Something happened at the beginning of this year that I didn't talk about enough with others. I've never really been good at sharing when I feel low and worry that I'll make people feel uncomfortable for sharing my feelings, or worse, make them feel like they need to take on my problems. After going through that experience and putting together this issue I realise how flawed that thinking was, and how extremely important talking openly about mental health truly is.

At the start of this year I lost my grandmother, she was also my last grandparent. My parents were very busy growing up and it often meant Nan would look after me. Throughout periods of my life she practically raised me, she was like a second mother to me. It goes without saying that losing her was a very difficult experience for me. This was after I'd recently lost two other grandparents, losing all three in the space of eight months. For several weeks I was going through immense grief, it seemed like I could break down at any moment and I would cry myself to sleep every night. I wouldn't feel like doing things I normally like doing and just kind of became bored with life and everyday conversation.

I noticed some emotional triggers during this time as well. Merely spotting old people would make me upset and I was slightly jealous of the people who still had their grandparents. I broke down several times when I walked past the hospital where my grandmother died. There was countless other things that would set me off and I can't remember how many times I cried, but I know that this is the lowest I had ever felt in life.

However, it was during this time that I had the realisation that I wasn't the only one suffering – the

rest of my family was too. Nan wasn't just a grandmother to me, she was a grandmother to six other grandchildren, as well as being a mother to four of her own children. Every one of her direct relatives, as well as her friends were dealing with her loss in their own ways too. I soon learnt that although life is really shitty sometimes, when you realise you're not the only one who feels shitty, there's a kind of solace in that.

Of course I can still have down days, or the odd reminder here and there, but for the most part I've come to accept her passing. I talked with my family about how I was feeling and we've all had a good cry together, but we've also had a good laugh too. When she had her stroke she was found with her underpants on the outside of her pants, so I like to remember her as my "Super Nan". Even if her costume wasn't the coolest, she'll still be a hero in my eyes.

I'll admit her death was heartbreaking to go through and the aftermath was one of the most difficult periods in my life, but it has brought me and some of my family members closer than ever before. I also know that although I never got to show her *Verse*, she'd be proud of me and she'd also be proud all of you too. You're all incredible and I am still astounded by the resilience of each and everyone one of you. Putting this together has been a truly touching experience and I hope these pieces can have a positive impact by providing a sense of relatability and shared experience for students going through their own mental health battles.

I have learnt that I need to share my feelings more and I think this edition is a testament to this. We should be more vulnerable, more open with our emotions and not be scared to share how we are feeling. Don't just ask your mates how they are going, but truly ask them how they are feeling at the moment. Let's be ready to listen without judgement, with empathy and love. Let's also not be afraid to share either – I learnt this the hard way. Always remember that there's power in seeking support, not weakness. It's only in opening up that we can truly let our negative emotions out, and find space to let the positive ones in.

So this one's for you Super Nan, miss ya and love ya. ◊