

Bereavement

Death and bereavement are an inevitable part of life, particularly in the current COVID-19 situation, and yet it is a subject that is very rarely talked about. The unpredictability of life means we can never be sure how soon or how often we will face the challenge of this major life event. The death of someone close to us is probably the most severe loss we ever have to cope with and can affect us in many very different ways.



How will bereavement affect me?

Reactions to loss vary enormously and there is no right or wrong way to respond. However most people report a similar range of reactions and it can be important to know that these are normal and not a sign of illness. When someone close to us dies, some of the many different feelings and reactions we may experience can include:

As well as the emotional pain of the loss, we may also experience practical and financial consequences as a result of the bereavement. These can include accommodation issues, childcare and support difficulties, financial pressures and legal issues connected with settling the estate of someone who has died.

Anger	Memories
Denial	Mood swings
Depression	Numbness
Fear	Reliving
Feeling let down	Remembering
Feelings of injustice	Sadness
Guilt	Shock
Hope	Still seeing or hearing that person
Lack of confidence	Longing
Loss of identity	Suicidal thoughts

What can I do?

How an individual responds after the loss of a loved one is very personal. Some of us will find that crying can give relief or being with family or friends can help us feel supported. At other times, we may have a desire to be on our own. It is important to remember that there is no right or wrong in bereavement and giving ourselves permission to feel the way we do rather than the way we think we should feel is important.



Talk

It may be helpful to talk through feelings and memories. This can often help us to understand and process our emotional reactions to the loss and enable us to redefine our relationship with the person who has died. If we don't feel like talking, that is ok too, but it is important not to become too isolated.



Be aware of stress, and take time to grieve

The worries following bereavement can lead to concentration problems and this in turn can make us more accident-prone. Take things slowly. It can take a long time to learn to adjust to a major bereavement.



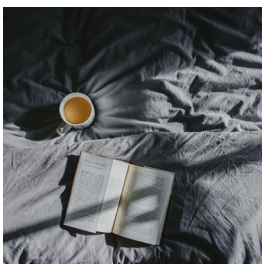
Plan ahead

Over the first year following a major loss, there will be a whole series of new anniversaries. It can be important to prepare ourselves for these and perhaps to take time off work or think of special things to do on birthdays or other significant dates.



Keep special things

Although a loved one may no longer be around, our relationship with that person does not end with their death. Photographs or other objects can help us to transform painful memories of the death into a more balanced memory of the importance of the relationship both in the past and in the future.



Look after your physical health

Eat regular nourishing food, exercise and take plenty of rest even if our sleep is disturbed. Avoid alcohol - although alcohol or other drugs may temporarily numb the emotional pain of the loss, in the longer term, they may lead to other difficulties.

Where can I get help?

It may be possible to claim various benefits or allowances. For information on a step by step guide following bereavement, financial support, allowances and management of the deceased allowances go to the gov.uk website.

Speaking to your GP can sometimes be helpful if you are finding that your distress is overwhelming. Alternatively, your GP may suggest speaking to a counsellor as a way of helping you to adjust to what has happened. In the longer term, your GP may suggest medication if the depression following bereavement becomes severe or prolonged.

CRUSE Bereavement Care

A national bereavement organisation offering emotional support regardless of age, race or belief.

UK: www.cruse.org.uk
Helpline: 0808 808 1677

Scotland: www.crusescotland.org.uk
Helpline: 0845 600 2227

Child Death Helpline

Help and support for those affected by the death of a child.

www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk
Tel: 0800 282 986

Winston's Wish

Offers practical support and help to bereaved children and their families following a loss.

www.winstonswish.org.uk
Tel: 08088 020 021

Information on practicalities of what to do after a death

www.gov.uk/register-a-death
www.nrscotland.gov.uk/registration/registering-a-death