

Coping with your grief

Bereavement is something which most of us experience at some time in our lives and this loss can be distressing. Grieving is a natural process that can take place after any kind of loss. Grief is not an illness and you need not be alarmed by the feelings that you have.

Grief varies for everyone

This leaflet describes some of the feelings that people have when they grieve. This may vary with different cultures and religious beliefs. People react in their own way when they are grieving the loss of someone close to them. Each person and relationship is special and unique so no one can tell you what you should be feeling or how you should behave. The important thing is to allow yourself to feel and do what is right for you in your own time – for some it is a matter of months, for others years; but you must allow time for healing to take place. Don't ignore your grief or try to move on before you feel ready; there is no right or wrong amount of time to grieve.

Take your time

You may find it impossible to take in what has happened. Your first reaction can include disbelief and confusion; even when expecting a death, it can come as a shock, leaving you unprepared and anxious. There will be some practical things you will have to attend to and you will have decisions to make, but don't be rushed into them if there is no need. You may find it helpful to talk to someone about practical issues.

Feelings you may experience

It can be two to three months after someone has died that the full impact of your loss may be felt and you may be surprised by the intensity of your feelings. You may become: forgetful and find it hard to concentrate. You may experience a whole range of feelings such as:

- physical pain
- great sadness
- isolation
- weight loss
- loss of appetite
- restlessness
- change in sleep pattern
- helplessness
- anxiety and anger.

You may blame yourself because you wish that you had done things differently. It is not uncommon to have feelings of relief that the person has died and their pain and suffering is over and then you feel guilty of having these feelings. These are caring feelings, but if you are worried about how you feel it may help to talk it through and get some support. Birthdays, anniversaries and holidays are difficult times, even when you thought you had moved on. It can be hard to manage bereavement alone, this is not a sign of weakness and it takes courage and strength to ask for help.

Your family and friends

Your family and friends will also be experiencing grief which will be unique to them. You may find that friends and neighbours sometimes avoid you. This is because they don't know what to say to you and are finding it difficult to cope with their loss. Family members may have different feelings. Try to acknowledge these differences and share your thoughts and feelings, lessening your loneliness and bringing you closer together. Family and friends are a tremendous support, so try to keep in touch.

Children

Children generally do not understand the meaning of death until they are three or four years old. They may appear to have overcome grief quite quickly as they haven't questioned what has occurred. This questioning can occur at a later date. It is important to show grief together. Young and older children need to be given the opportunity to express how they are feeling from honest simple information to help them make sense of things.

With the passage of time you will find memories are perhaps less painful and look back without being distressed.

Things to consider.....

- ◇ Everyone grieves in their own way and at their own pace.
- ◇ Do what is right for you and don't let people tell you how you should grieve.
- ◇ Don't hide your feelings. Talk about them as much and as often as you need, to someone you trust.
- ◇ Keep in touch with family and friends.
- ◇ Look after yourself.
- ◇ Do ask family, friends and or professionals for support and assistance if you need it.
- ◇ Don't struggle alone.

Supportive organisations

Oldham Bereavement Service.
Provides counselling and advice and a home visiting service.
0161-627-2902

Compassionate Friends.
A self help organisation for parents whose child has died – including adult children.
08451 23 23 04 (local rate)

The Samaritans.
24 hour help line for people in despair.
0161-480-2222

Cruse Bereavement.
Provides counselling, information and advice as well as social activities for bereaved people.
0161-236-8103

District Nurse.
Can be contacted through your GP.

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Help and advice for those grieving.....

..and how you may feel.