

Grief

Grief is very personal, but from talking to many bereaved people over the years, we would like to offer some pointers which you may find helpful.

Grief is normal - it is part of what it is to be human and to have feelings.

Grief is the price we pay for love - we feel this pain because the person who died meant so much to us.

Grief is a process through which we travel - but we will emerge from it.

There is no right way to grieve - other people's advice may be helpful, but how each person grieves is personal.

There are no shortcuts - grief takes time, often much longer than we think, and certainly longer than many people around us expect.

It is normal to both grieve and live - when we find ourselves not thinking about the person who has died, that is alright.

Grief is hard for other people - they often don't know what to say, and may say the wrong things, but it is usually because they care.

Grief can be lonely - and can lead to depressing thoughts and even thoughts of suicide. It is alright to experience, and to express, these thoughts.

The turmoil of our emotions may make us feel as though we are going mad - this is normal.

One way to help yourself might be to find someone who will listen - and then to talk.

Some useful phone numbers:

Cruse Bereavement Care Scotland

Caring for the bereaved people of Scotland.
www.crusescotland.org.uk
0845 600 22 27

Breathing Space (Scotland)

A service for people with low mood or depression
www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk
0800 83 85 87

Samaritans

Need to talk to someone? 24 hour service.
www.samaritans.org.uk
08457 90 90 90

Citizen's Advice Bureau

Help with legal, money and other matters.
www.citizensadvice.org.uk
see local Phone Book

The Compassionate Friends

Support for bereaved parents and their families.
www.tcf.org.uk
0845 123 2304

Cruse Bereavement Care

England, Wales and Northern Ireland
offering a range of services for bereaved people.
www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk
0870 167 1677

We're sorry to hear
that you have recently
experienced the death
of someone close.

If you require a copy of this
publication in an alternative
format, call 01738 444178.

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Feelings

The death of someone close can bring many different feelings and emotions, some of which may feel quite frightening.

It is normal to experience some, or all, of the following:

Anger

- At what has happened
- At the people around us

Confusion

- Nothing makes sense
- Difficulty in concentrating
- Can't get organised

Disappointment

- At losing what might have been

Disbelief

- That this death is real

Gratitude

- For the good times we had together

Helplessness

- Not knowing what to do next
- Feeling that we cannot cope

Fear

- Of what lies ahead
- About our own life – or our death

Guilt

- About things we could or should have done
- About how we feel

Loneliness

- Missing the person's physical presence
- Feeling that part of us has gone

Regret

- At things said or not said
- At things done or not done

Relief

- That their suffering is over

Sadness

- Deep and painful emptiness
- Feelings that cannot be put into words

Take care!

When we are struggling to come to terms with the death of someone we can be very vulnerable in a number of ways:

Accidents

Because concentration is difficult it may be that accidents are more likely. It is important to take extra care, even in simple tasks like making a cup of tea.

Alcohol

It may seem helpful to ease the pain of grief by having a drink. However alcohol may make us more depressed, and it is easy to become overly dependent on alcohol as an escape.

Drugs

The use of prescribed drugs to dull the pain of grief in the short term may be helpful, but be guided by your doctor. It is easy to become overly dependent on drugs of any kind as an escape.

Driving

When our concentration is not as sharp as usual, and thoughts of what has happened can flood our minds, driving can be dangerous. Better to ask someone else to drive. If the person who died was the usual driver, you might want to consider using taxis for a while.

Eating

Appetite may be reduced, or it may just seem too much effort to make a meal. However we need nourishment to continue to cope – even if it is just a healthy snack. Some people may “comfort eat” but this also can be unhealthy.

Illness

Grief can make us more vulnerable to illness. It can also cause a variety of physical symptoms such as back pain and stomach upsets. If these persist, speak with your doctor.

Nightmares

Dreaming about what has happened and about the person who has died is normal. However if you find yourself having continuous nightmares following a traumatic death, speak with your doctor.

Sleeping

Grief frequently disturbs normal sleeping patterns, and can bring unusual or disturbing dreams, and the lack of sleep can be exhausting. If this persists, then speak with your doctor.

Suicidal

It is common to question the meaning of our own lives following a death, and thoughts of suicide are not unusual. However if the thought persists, it is important to share this with others, or speak to your doctor.

What helps?

Do it your way

- Each of us is different, and we need to grieve in our own way.
- Others will offer suggestions – which may help or may not be what you need.

Don't expect too much of yourself

- Grief is a major event in our lives. It affects us in many ways.
- If there are things you want to do yourself, try to do them. If there are things others can do for you, then let them do them.

Take your time

- Grieving takes time. Plan ahead what you need to do; realise that even simple tasks may take longer.

Rituals

- Take time to make sure the funeral gives you what you need.
- Arrange your own ritual – planting a tree, or placing a special photograph.

Remember

- Memories are helpful – they link us to the person who has died. It can be helpful to share your memories, and hear those of others.
- Photographs, favourite music, items of clothing, and similar things can help to make memories real.

Talk

- Sharing your thoughts, your memories, your fears and your doubts is one of the most important ways to help yourself.

And finally: Know when to ask for help

The journey of grief is a long one as we slowly get used to the absence of the person. It is time to ask for help if:

- thoughts of ending your own life become more, rather than less, frequent.
- your nightmares about the death persist, or you cannot bear to think about what happened.
- you feel, after a few months, that the pain of the loss is just as sharp as it was at the time, or your emotions are still in turmoil.
- if your relationships with family or friends are becoming strained, or you feel your performance at work is suffering.