

Living through grief



Cruse
Bereavement
Care
Scotland

Often we long for the person who has died

 | Freephone helpline: **0808 802 6161**

 | Webchat service: **crusescotland.org.uk**

 | Email: **support@crusescotland.org.uk**

As time goes on

Following the funeral, as other people return to their own lives, the feeling of emptiness can become all too real.

This is the time when the reality that death robs us of someone we love strikes home. Physical loneliness is hard.

The empty chair that faces us across a room can be a constant reminder of our loss; but the emotional loneliness is very much harder – the fact that when we are with a group of other people, even with our own family, we can feel totally and utterly alone.

It is normal to feel this very deep and painful emotion which it often seems nobody else can understand. People have described this as like a

weight dragging them down, like a knot in the pit of their stomach, or like being in a very dark hole.

Waves of grief

Often we long for the person who has died and it is not uncommon to be reminded of them, or feel their presence, when we hear a particular piece of music, see certain things or smell certain smells. We may feel surprise that these things can awaken such emotions in us, even after several weeks or even months.

Sometimes the initial emotional responses, perhaps feeling angry or

Waves of grief (cont'd)

crying, come back just at the point when we thought we were beginning to move on.

It can be quite unnerving to feel that we are not coping as well as we thought we were, but this is part of our own safety system. We can only deal with so much grief at a time.

There will be times when we feel we are making progress, and others when we find ourselves right back in the deep pain of our grief. Occasions such as anniversaries, birthdays and festivals, may make the pain

Do what is right for you

We may feel guilty when we stop grieving, but we need to live as well as to grieve.

It is an important part of the journey of recovery from grief to start to reconnect

feel as sharp as ever. It will help to plan for such events and be ready for the deep feelings of sadness which can swamp us once more.

One of the best ways we can help ourselves on the journey of grief is to talk — to share with others the story of the person who has died and to speak about our relationship with them.

We may do this with friends or family, with a doctor or someone from a faith group, or any special person in whom we can confide.

with other people and with our life before the death.

Initially other people may try to involve us before we are ready, and it is easy to get into a habit of saying

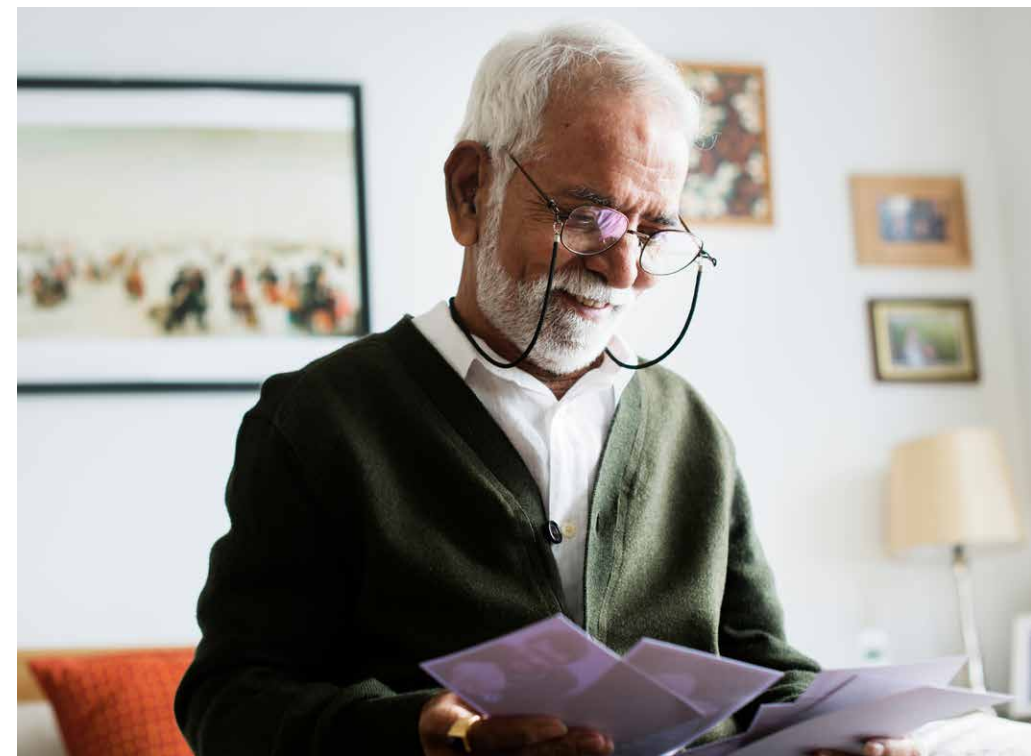
“no” to invitations. If you do not want to go somewhere, or do something, explain that the time is not right, but ask people to invite you again.

When you are ready, take people up on their offers and accept the help they can give.

Take your time

If you are involved in supporting other members of your family, friends or colleagues in their grief, then it is important to remember that you also need to look after yourself.

Try to protect some time for you – time when you can be in touch with your own emotions and visit your own memories.



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Looking after yourself

Sometimes illness and physical symptoms can follow the death of someone close.

There may be some difficulty in sleeping, a change in appetite, a lack of energy or difficulty in concentrating.

All of this is normal, but if you are worried about your own health you should speak with your doctor.

Remember that grief takes time. Other people may suggest you should be “getting over it” but only you know what pace is right for you.

On the other hand, if, after a few months, you become concerned that you are not making the progress in your grief that you want to make, if you feel you are stuck, then it would be helpful to check this out with your doctor or an organisation such as Cruse Scotland, which has volunteers trained to offer this kind of support.

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.



Further support to help

Breathing Space (Scotland)

A service for people with low mood or depression.
0800 83 85 87

Samaritans

Need to talk to someone? 24 hour service.
www.samaritans.org.uk | 116 123

Citizen's Advice Scotland

Help with legal, money and other matters
www.cas.org.uk | Please see your local phone book

The Compassionate Friends

Support for bereaved parents and their families
www.tcf.org.uk | 0345 123 2304

Cruse Bereavement Care

England, Wales and Northern Ireland offering a wide range of services for bereaved people
www.cruse.org.uk | 0844 477 94000

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 | Email: **support@crusescotland.org.uk**



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