
Part B

Coping with Bereavement and Grief

The death of someone close can be devastating. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' way to grieve and your experience of grief will be different from other people's. Your reactions may be influenced by a number of things including your previous experiences of bereavement, your age and personality, your religious and spiritual beliefs, cultural background, your actual life circumstances and how you cope with loss.

The following information aims to help you understand some of the emotions which you may face during your bereavement and to make some practical suggestions to help you through this difficult time. At the back of this booklet there are some addresses and telephone numbers of organisations which may be helpful to you.

Impact of Covid -19

Coping with loss during the **COVID-19** pandemic may have added additional stress for you and your family. Restrictions may have been in place if your loved one was in hospital and you may not have been able to visit or be with them when they died. New guidance on procedures that must be in place following a death may have restricted your normal ways of grieving, or prevented you from being with others who would support you. Self-isolation and social distancing may have resulted in you feeling increased loneliness and abandonment, or may have prevented others from offering practical help.

Alternatively, being at home isolating as a family may have prevented you from having the space you needed to deal with your own emotions, whilst trying to support others. The global impact of COVID-19 also meant that it was hard to avoid information about loss and the losses that others have experienced

and that may have been overwhelming.

Grief at any time is difficult and painful and whilst COVID-19 may present additional challenges to the process, you will also experience all of the normal pain of loss and separation.

1. Understanding grief

Every person's experience of grief is different but when someone close dies you may initially feel **shocked, numb, angry, guilty and scared**. These feelings can change to feelings of **sadness, pining, loneliness** - thinking about how you will cope in the future may frighten you.

These are some of the common feelings that many people share and over time you may find that these feelings lessen. Whilst every person's experience of grief is unique there are some common reactions to bereavement.

'Is it normal to have physical reactions to my loss?'

Physical reactions to a death are very common. You may find you don't want to eat, you feel exhausted and frequently people find that they are unable to sleep. Poor sleep patterns can leave you unable to think clearly and feeling drained. Other physical symptoms can include feeling empty inside, headaches, stomach aches and generally feeling run down. Whilst these reactions should pass in time, if they persist you may want to consult your GP.

'Am I going mad? I keep on hearing their voice'

You may have what you feel are some odd experiences. It is not unusual to see or hear the person who has died. Many people talk to the person as if they were still there. This can happen when you are not expecting it, almost as if your mind has 'forgotten' for a moment that they have died.

'Why can't I stop going over and over every detail of his last few days?'

It is a common reaction to keep on repeatedly thinking about what happened particularly if the death was sudden and traumatic or

occurred in traumatic circumstances. It seems to be the mind's way of processing what has happened and this tends to reduce over time. Talking with the health care professionals involved at the time of death may help – see the contact details on the front cover.

'I feel like there's no point in going on'

It is not unusual for people coping with bereavement to think about their own death and ending their own life as a way out of the pain. It is really important to share these thoughts with people you can trust. It is very common to feel hopeless and despairing after the death of someone close but if these feelings continue and you feel overwhelmed, please see the section on **When to seek further help** on page 26.

'I just feel so guilty'

A lot of people wonder whether they could have done anything differently which might have helped or prevented the death; they may feel guilt at somehow having let the person down or think constantly 'if only I had...'. It is also common to feel relief at someone's death following a long and painful illness and then to feel guilty for feeling like this. It can be extremely painful to live with these emotions but ultimately feeling guilty will not help. If you can, try and focus on the good times and avoid focusing on events in the past which you cannot change.

If you find you cannot move past these feelings of guilt, you may choose to seek support to talk about them further (see page 34).

'Why do I feel so angry?'

Unfortunately the death of someone close can bring changes in terms of financial and family responsibilities that you may feel you can't cope with. You may feel really angry that you are being left on your own to handle all these things. Or perhaps you feel angry with someone you consider to be responsible for the death. Anger is a healthy and normal part of grief. It is a reaction to feeling out of control and abandoned. If you do have any questions about the final illness of your loved one, then it may well be helpful to make contact with the doctors or nurses who looked after them - see the contact details on the front page of this booklet.

‘Why have people stopped caring?’

‘They don’t come around any more or ring me like they used to’. Sometimes people avoid the bereaved person because they don’t know what to say or are scared of upsetting you. Sometimes people just do not realise how long it takes to recover from a death and expect you to be feeling better very quickly. You may need to tell friends and family that it helps to talk about the person who has died.

‘I can’t concentrate and I am worried about how I will cope at work’

People find it hard to concentrate after a death; you may find it really difficult to read a book or watch television; it’s quite normal to feel like this and to forget where things are or what you are meant to be doing. However this can be worrying and can cause problems at work. It is a good idea to talk to your manager to explain this. It may even be worthwhile exploring whether there is a possibility of altering your working hours or other ways of working to help you through this difficult period.

‘When am I going to start to feel better?’

It takes time to heal from grief and each of us responds differently. Coming to terms with a death is a very gradual process which can take a long time. In the initial days after a bereavement family and friends often pull together and support you but frequently the reality of the death takes time to sink in and it is often when family and friends think you should be ‘getting better’ and pull back a little that you feel at your most lonely and sad.

Over time people usually find that they are able to get on with their lives whilst continuing to remember their loved ones. Generally people start to feel like this within one or two years of the death. If you are beginning to start rebuilding your life try not to feel guilty. It is normal to begin to recover and to start to rebuild your life – it does not in any way mean you are being disloyal to the person who has died.

2. Taking care of yourself - do’s and don’ts

It is generally agreed that the following may be helpful at this difficult time.

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- **Do** express your emotions.
 - **Do** remember that you need time to rest, think and sleep.
 - **Do** be gentle with yourself. If you have a bad day, put it behind you and have another go.
 - **Don't** stifle your feelings.
 - **Don't** avoid talking about what has happened.

3. Supporting children and young people

Adults try to protect children, often afraid they will make the situation worse for the children, believing they are too young to understand. Adults also try to shield children, believing that not talking will protect them from feelings of sadness and pain. However, this can leave children feeling **excluded, afraid, and alone**, unable to ask questions relating to illness and death. Like adults, children will feel a range of emotions such as: **sadness, anger, confusion, fear, loneliness, guilt, and disbelief.**

Behaviours you might see in a child who is bereaved:

- Children may become clingy.
- They may show distress at separation from family members.
- Children may worry about their health and that of those around them.
- Children may have difficulties concentrating and become distracted.
- Children can become the compliant child or naughty child.
- They might have difficulties eating or sleeping.

Dealing with these behaviours can seem overwhelming and you may feel you need support.

What children need:

- An opportunity to make sense of what has happened, and tell their own story.
- Clear, age-appropriate information about what has happened, and what is happening now, and to be included.

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- Reassurance about their own health and that of those around them.
 - Reassurance that it is not their fault.
 - Adults who will answer questions and share their feelings.
 - An opportunity to remember the person who has died.
 - An opportunity to attend the funeral, and contribute to the way the service is run. Further information on children and funerals can be found at www.stchristophers.org.uk/leaflet/candle-children-and-funerals

Talking reduces both isolation and anxiety. It enables children to understand their own experience of bereavement and that of others. It fosters an ability to cope, and empowers them with a more positive outlook.

4. When to seek further help

The following is a list of symptoms and feelings often associated with grief. Whilst these can be a normal part of grieving, if they persist and make it difficult to manage day-to-day tasks you may wish to seek professional help if you:

- Are always feeling exhausted, anxious, suicidal, depressed, helpless, experiencing uncontrollable anger, sleeplessness or feeling stressed.
- Are becoming withdrawn and unable to speak or spend time with family and friends, or are finding it difficult to cope at work, school etc.
- Are becoming dependent on drugs or alcohol.
- Have little desire to get involved in activities you once enjoyed.

Your family doctor may be able to help particularly if you are worried about your own health. You can also contact the West Cheshire Bereavement Service hosted by the Hospice of the Good Shepherd on 01244 853193 to discuss whether there may be other avenues of support that you could explore to help you through this difficult time.

Remember, this may be in the first few weeks, many months or years after someone has died (refer to the section on page 35 ‘where can I get support at a later date?’).

5. Useful booklets and leaflets

- What to do after someone dies
www.gov.uk/after-a-death/overview
- Funeral Payment form (SF200 10/14)
- How to obtain Probate (PA2)
- Reading for adults on bereavement see the following website or ask your local library
www.stchristophers.co.uk/library
- Reading for children and young adults on bereavement see the website below, if you do not have access to the internet, your local library will be able to help you.
www.stchristophers.org.uk/candle

6. Support organisations

Local organisations that may be able to offer help

General

West Cheshire Bereavement Service

Hospice of the Good Shepherd, Gordon Lane, Backford, Chester, CH2 4DG

Tel: 01244 853193

Email: bereavement@hospicegs.com

Website: www.hospiceofthegoodshepherd.com

Service offering bereavement support through counselling or befriending for all bereaved people throughout West Cheshire, irrespective of cause or place of death. The service also offers pre-bereavement support.

Information on coping with bereavement, including a section on talking to someone who is bereaved, is available on the Bereavement Service section of the website.

Bereavement Help Points in Cheshire.

Bereavement Help Points are a friendly space open to anyone who is bereaved or is supporting someone who is bereaved. Drop in and collect information on bereavement and support.

- Chat with one of our trained volunteers or with other bereaved people
- A fantastic opportunity for the community to support each other and for those grieving the loss of a loved one to be reassured they are not alone.

Bereavement Help Points run in Chester, Elton, Sealand, Blacon, Ellesmere Port and there is also an online group. Please email bereavement@hospicegcs.com for more information.

Citizens Advice Bureau - Chester

The Bluecoat, Northgate Street, Chester, CH1 4EE

Tel: 0344 57 66 111

Website: www.cwcab.org.uk

Citizens Advice Bureau - Ellesmere Port

1 Whitby Road, Ellesmere Port, CH65 8AA

Tel: 0344 57 66 111

Website: www.cwcab.org.uk

The Citizens Advice service helps people resolve their legal, money and other problems by providing free, independent and confidential advice.

Cruse Bereavement Care - Wirral

Tel: 0151 645 6604

Website: www.cruse.org.uk/wirral-area

Offers counselling, support and advice for people living on the Wirral.

Cruse Bereavement Care - North Wales

Tel: 01492 536577

Website: www.crusenorthwalesarea.btck.co.uk

Offers counselling, support and advice for people living in North Wales.

Parabl Talking Therapies

Tel: 0300 777 2257

Website: www.parabl.org.uk

For people in North Wales Parabl Talking Therapies provides short-term therapeutic interventions for individuals facing common mental health difficulties or challenging life events which may be impacting on their emotional wellbeing.

Macmillan Community Support Service

To self-refer for emotional support:

[Macmillan Telephone Buddies - Macmillan Cancer Support](#).

This is a UK-wide scheme and you will be allocated to services within your region.

For any other queries for emotional and practical support:

vsnorth@macmillan.org.uk – for signposting to what support is available.

Macmillan Support & Information Manager

Countess of Chester Hospital, Liverpool Road, Chester, CH2 1UL

Tel: 01244 364948

Email: Cancer.support@nhs.net

This service is to support patients or family members or anyone who is or has been affected by cancer. This can include bereavement support, particularly when there are waiting times to access other services.

Face-to-face appointments are available.

The Samaritans - Chester

36 Upper Northgate St, Chester, CH1 4EF

Tel: 01244 377999 (local charges apply)
or 116 123 (free and anonymous)

Website: www.samaritans.org

24-hour telephone emotional and practical support, and face-to-face befriending during the day at local branches.

Widowed Friends - Chester

Email: widowedfriends@outlook.com

Chester-based friendship and social group for widows, widowers and people bereaved of their partner, however long ago.

Widows and Widowers of Cheshire

Website: www.meetup.com/widows-and-widowers-of-cheshire/

Chester-based group for people who have lost a partner. No restriction on membership location – if you are willing to travel, you are welcome. Not a support group or bereavement group as such, and definitely not a dating site, just a group of people getting on with life and having a lot of fun and laughter together.

Family & Child Bereavement

Elsie Ever After

Website: www.twitter.com/ElsieEverAfter
www.facebook.com/ElsieEverAfter

Email: elsieeverafter@hotmail.com

Cheshire-based organisation supporting bereaved families.

The Sunstone Centre at Hope House Children's Hospice

Tel: 01244 340 759

Website: www.hopehouse.org.uk/care/counselling

Counselling services and support for local families bereaved of a child.

Reflect Children's and Young People's Counselling Service

Hospice of the Good Shepherd, Gordon Lane, Backford, Chester, CH2 4DG

Tel: 01244 851104

Email: reflect@hospicegs.com

Website: www.hospiceofthegoodshepherd.com

Reflect offers information, support, sign posting and one-to-one counselling for children, young people and their families who are bereaved or have a family member with a life-threatening or life-changing diagnosis. Covers Chester, rural Chester, Deeside and Ellesmere Port.

National Organisations That May Be Able to Offer Help

General

Age UK

Tel: 0800 169 8787

Website: www.ageuk.org.uk

Provides information and advice to people over 50 on a variety of topics.

Bereavement Advice Centre

Tel: 0800 634 9494

Website: www.bereavementadvice.org

Offer practical information and advice on the issues and procedures facing us after a death.

Bereavement Trust

Tel: 0800 435 455

Website: www.bereavement-trust.org.uk

Support for anyone who has been bereaved.

The Bereavement Register

Tel: 020 7089 6403 or 0800 082 1230
(24hr automated registration service)

Website: www.the-bereavement-register.org.uk

Service specifically designed to remove the names and addresses of people who have died from databases and mailing files.

Cruse Bereavement Care

Tel: 0808 808 1677

Website: www.cruse.org.uk

Offers counselling, support and advice. A newsletter and extensive list of books and leaflets are published.

Lesbian and Gay support from London Friend

Tel: 020 7833 1674

Website: www.londonfriend.org.uk

Charity offering advice and emotional support to people bereaved by the death of a same sex partner.

NHS Live Well

Website: www.nhs.uk/livewell/bereavement/pages/coping-with-bereavement.aspx

NHS page with information on bereavement.

Roadpeace

Tel: 0845 4500 355

Website: www.roadpeace.org

Practical and emotional support service to those bereaved and injured through road traffic accidents.

SAMM (Support after Murder and Manslaughter)

Tel: 0845 872 3440

Website: www.samm.org.uk

Help for people who have suffered the loss of a child, relative or friend of any age as the result of murder or manslaughter. Secure telephone helpline, online forum, and non-religious weekend retreats.



Silverline

Tel: 0800 4 70 80 90

Website: www.thesilverline.org.uk

The Silver Line is the only free confidential telephone helpline offering information, friendship and advice to older people in the United Kingdom that's available 24 hours a day.

Support Line

Tel: 01708 765200

Email: info@supportline.org.uk

Provides emotional support and details of agencies, support groups, helplines and counsellors.

Tenovus Cancer Care

Tel: 0808 808 1010

Website: www.tenovuscancercare.org.uk

Charity offering telephone support or online support plus monthly bereavement support group based in Wrexham

Terrence Higgins Trust

Tel: 0808 802 1221 (Monday-Friday, 10am-8pm)

Website: www.tht.org.uk

Practical and emotional support to anyone who has lost someone to HIV/AIDS

Widowed and Young

Website: www.widowedandyoung.org.uk

WAY is a peer-to-peer support group for men and women aged 50 or under when their partner died.

Family & Child Bereavement**Care for the Family**

Tel: 029 2081 0800

Website: www.careforthefamily.org.uk/family-life/bereavement-support

Organisation promoting family life, offers bereavement support to those widowed young and those bereaved of a child, as well as support and advice for those who are currently supporting a bereaved person.

Child Bereavement Charity

Tel: 0800 028 8840 (helpline - free from landlines)
or 01928 577 164 (Cheshire)

Website: www.childbereavementuk.org

Offering support to those who have been bereaved of a child, or to children facing bereavement.

Child Death Helpline

Tel: 0800 282 986 (free from landline) or 0808 800 6019 (free from mobile)

Website: www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk

Helpline for anyone affected by the death of a child, in any circumstances, no matter how recently.

Childhood Bereavement Network

Website: www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk

Online directory of open access services for bereaved children.

Childline

Tel: 0800 1111

Website: www.childline.org.uk

Confidential help and support for children and young people.

Hope Again

Tel: 0808 808 1677 freephone helpline

Website: www.hopeagain.org.uk

Cruse's website for children and young people.

Reuben's Retreat

Website: www.reubensretreat.org

Charity in the process of developing a retreat for bereaved families. Other breaks are available through partner organisations while the retreat is being completed.

SANDS (Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Charity)

Tel: 020 7436 5881

Website: www.uk-sands.org/support

Organisation supporting anyone affected by the death of a baby, either before, during or shortly after birth. Includes sections for fathers and those long-ago bereaved.

Tamba (Twins and Multiple Births Association)

Website: www.tamba.org.uk/bereavement

Charity supporting parents of multiple births, including Facebook bereavement support page.

The Compassionate Friends

Tel: 0345 123 2304

Website: www.tcf.org.uk

Organisation of bereaved parents offering support and understanding after the death of a child of any age.

The Lullaby Trust

Tel: 0808 802 6868 (Mon-Fri 10am-5pm, Sat/Sun/Bank Hols 6pm-10pm)

Website: www.lullabytrust.org.uk

Specialist support for bereaved families and anyone affected by a sudden infant death.

Winston's Wish

Tel: 08088 020 021

Website: www.winstonswish.org.uk

Practical support and guidance to families and anyone concerned about a grieving child.

Meningitis

Meningitis Now

Tel: 0808 80 10 388

Website: www.meningitisnow.org

Charity offering information and support about Meningitis.

Motor Neurone Disease (MND)

Motor Neurone Disease Association

Tel: 01604 250505

Website: www.mndassociation.org

Organisation supporting those affected by MND.

Suicide

CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably)

Tel: 0800 585858

Website: www.thecalmzone.net

Organisation dedicated to preventing male suicide

Papyrus

Tel: 0800 068 4141

Website: www.papyrus-uk.org

Charity dedicated to the prevention of young suicide.

SOBS (Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide)

Tel: 0300 111 5065 (9am - 9pm daily)

Website: www.uk-sobs.org.uk

Exists to meet the needs and break the isolation of those bereaved by the suicide of a close relative or friend.

7. Where can I get support at a later date

We hope this booklet has helped you understand some of the ways losing a loved one can impact on you practically, emotionally and physically. If you feel you are struggling, or you are worried about a friend or relative, you may wish to contact your GP or one of the organisations in the booklet. Or you may wish to receive more one-to-one support via counselling or befriending, in which case please contact the West Cheshire Bereavement Service hosted by the Hospice of the Good Shepherd on 01244 853193, by emailing bereavement@hospicegs.com or visiting our website at www.hospiceofthegoodshepherd.com.

Alternatively, return this page by post and the service will contact you to discuss your requirements.

Name:

Address:

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Postcode:

Phone number:

Please return to:

West Cheshire Bereavement Service
Hospice of the Good Shepherd
Gordon Lane
Backford
CH2 4DG



Feedback Form for Comments and Suggestions

Your feedback is invaluable to us and we would appreciate it if you would complete this form to give us your views on the contents of this booklet, how helpful you found it and how it could be improved for future editions.

1. Did you find this booklet useful? **Yes / No**

2. Was there one aspect of the booklet which was most useful to you?

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3. Was there one aspect of the booklet which was least useful to you?

.....

4. Was there anything you would have liked to find in the booklet which was not included?

Yes / No If Yes, please give detail

.....

5. Where did you receive the booklet from? **GP / Hospital / Friend or relative /**

Other

6. Any other comments?

.....

Name:

Address:

.....

..... Postcode:

Telephone:

Email:

We might wish to contact you to clarify your comments or to request further feedback in the future. If you would prefer not to be contacted please tick here [].

Thank you for the time taken to offer us your comments. Please return completed form to:

Feedback, West Cheshire Bereavement Service, Hospice of the Good Shepherd,
Gordon Lane, Backford, Chester, CH2 4DG.

Or feed back by email to bereavement@hospicegs.com

Or by visiting www.hospiceofthegoodshepherd.com

Notes

