



# **After a Death**

## **Grieving the loss of someone**

## Grief

**Grief is a very individual and unique experience depending on a variety of factors and experiences. Some of these issues may occur in your grief.**

There is no set pattern for grieving. Your grief will depend on the person you are, the relationship you had with the person who died and the circumstances of the loss. It can be helpful to check out 'how you are doing' with a trusted friend, your GP or another professional.

*"I find it really difficult when people say they know how I feel."*

## Feelings

Grief can express itself in many different ways, often accompanied by powerful, frightening and confused feelings. At times people may feel guilty, even simply for having had a good time, this is normal. People often describe feeling numb, panicky, angry, very weepy or unable to cry at all. After a time these feelings become less intense and people begin to take up aspects of their life again.

*"My feelings change constantly. I never know how I will feel from one minute to the next. I feel like I am outside myself, watching myself do things."*

## Thoughts

Some people may find it hard to concentrate or sort out priorities. Tasks that are usually simple may feel too difficult to handle. You may think or wonder 'what's the point of going on?' or be scared about the future.

You may have thoughts about the circumstances of the death and wonder what you could have done differently. These are common thoughts, often when there has been relief at someone's death after a painful and prolonged illness. Some people experience quite disturbing dreams or nightmares which may involve the person that has died. Over time these dreams usually fade.

## What about young children?

People often worry about how to support young children when someone in the family dies. We often think we should protect children, but with sensitive information given in small chunks, and giving informed choices, children can learn to cope with grief. Local specialist services are available if you feel this would help.

*"I worry about myself, but I worry about the children too."*

## Time Span

People often ask how long grief lasts. It is impossible to say, as every loss is individual, and 'it takes as long as it takes'. People often find they have good days and bad days. Some people feel they will never get over the loss of someone, but do learn to adjust and go on living.

## Physical

People often describe physical symptoms of grief. These might include feeling pains in the chest, tiredness and lethargy, loss of appetite, panic and palpitations, and changes in sleeping patterns. All of these are common. If you are concerned or worried about any physical symptoms it is always wise to consult your GP.

*"I don't feel like doing anything at all."*

## What can help?

- Give your self some time to grieve, but balance this with activity
- Take some time out to be with friends and family, a bit of distraction can be helpful
- Food, exercise, rest and sleeping are all important
- Find time to talk about the person who died with someone who is happy to reminisce
- Get help or advice if you think you need it

## And what doesn't

- Don't give yourself a hard time, grieving takes time
- You know how you feel - don't think that other people know better than you
- Don't worry about things you don't need to
- Don't rush to make decisions

## Where can I get help?

Grief is a normal response to a death, and people do manage to cope with it. People experience a range of feelings and worries, but gradually pick up the threads of their lives and continue to live life despite missing the person who has died.

Friends and family are often a source of great support and help, and can offer great comfort at the time of and after bereavement. People often find that this immediate support and encouragement helps them face the reality of the loss and find a new way of living now the person has died.

However, sometimes people feel that they need extra help, if they are struggling to pick up or they do not have any support from family and friends.

Your GP or the people and services that helped care for your relative are able to advise you about the support that is available locally, or you could contact the following:

Cruse Bereavement Care on **01242 252 518**

Or in cases of urgency or out of hours:

The Samaritans on **01242 515 777** and **01452 306 333**.

If you believe your loss arises from a rather special situation, for example from suicide or a stillbirth, then you may like to know that some support organisations specialise in helping with these and other types of losses.

To find out more you can access a comprehensive guide to local and national services entitled "Bereavement Services in Gloucestershire" available at:

**[www.guide-information.org.uk/\\_links.htm](http://www.guide-information.org.uk/_links.htm)**.

Your local Public Library and GP's surgery will also have a copy and your GP may also be able to direct you to other local support groups.

### Contacts:

This leaflet has been designed by the BIGG (Bereavement Interest Group for Gloucestershire) a collaborative consortium of statutory and voluntary agencies offering bereavement services across the county. This leaflet is funded by the Gloucestershire NHS Primary Care Trust. The directory was created by BIGG and is maintained by GUIDE & PALS.

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