

A Guide to Bereavement and Loss

Bereavement Office
Tel: 01473 704498

Introduction

The purpose of this booklet is to provide some information about bereavement and the emotions that often accompany it. You should have been given a booklet ('What do I do now?') which advises about practicalities.

You may not feel like reading this booklet immediately, but many people find it useful to come back to at a later date. We suggest you keep it for future reference. It also has some contact numbers which might be useful over the next few months.

Grief

When someone close to us dies, whether the death was expected or more sudden, the sense of shock and loss can be overwhelming.

Often there is a sense of numbness, unreality and disbelief. This feeling can often last for several weeks or even months as reality gradually dawns.

Grief can often be a deeply painful and confusing process. Life will never be quite the same again and it will take time to feel on some sort of even keel.

Although you will never forget the person who has died or the meaning of the relationship you shared, most people find that over a period of time the memory carries less pain and a new perspective on life can gradually be realised. For some this may happen quite quickly, but it is not unusual for a few years to pass before you establish a new sense of purpose. Generally the intensity of your loss will subside during this time.

For some people the loss can be a great relief and there can be a sense of release, for whatever reason.

Everyone's experience of grief and loss is as unique as every relationship. However there are some common feelings which can be experienced, not necessarily in any order.

These might include:

- shock;
- anger;
- sadness and sudden tearfulness;
- guilt;
- intense loneliness;
- pining;
- panic – How will I cope? What does the future hold?;
- erratic sleeping and moods;
- appetite changes.

These feelings often come and go and can linger for two or three years. Sometimes they can resolve in quite a short space of time. Grief is a painful process that gradually eases as we adapt to a life very much changed by the absence of our loved one. It is also important to remember that children grieve, although this may not always be as obvious as when adults do.

Some dos and don'ts

- Do give yourself permission to express your grief in your own way, not how others tell you.
- Do be involved with practical matters, but do let others help.
- Do seek help if you begin to feel concerned about yourself (or a family member).
- Do try to eat and look after yourself generally.
- Do rest if you feel tired, this is normal.
- Do begin to notify banks, building societies, utility companies etc.
- Don't be embarrassed or concerned about being tearful or needing to talk about your loss.
- Don't make any major changes in your life.

Support

Remember, although painful, it is normal to grieve and it is often family and friends who provide the support and comfort needed at this time.

If you become concerned about how your grief is affecting you there are various avenues available. Many people find their GP helpful and there may be a counsellor attached to your surgery if you feel the need to discuss concerns. Your local church or faith group may be able to offer support.

Cruse is a national organisation with local branches which offers support and guidance after bereavement and you will find numbers for Cruse at the end of this booklet.

A few other phone numbers and websites are included in this booklet, including details for the Bereavement Advice Centre which has a more comprehensive list. You may also find that your funeral director's brochure has useful information and contact details.

Financial and other practical concerns

If you have practical or financial concerns, and don't know who to contact, telephone the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) on 01473 219777 for information.

Hospital support

Immediately around the time of death the nursing team will do their best to give support. If so desired, a hospital chaplain can be asked to spend time with you, with or without any religious connotation. If you have a particular religious creed or faith we will do our best to meet your needs in this respect.

Some hospital departments have their own bereavement follow-up system, including the Emergency Department, the Critical Care Unit and the Oncology Department. You may find that they contact you some weeks after the death.

Death following cancer

If the death has occurred as a result of cancer, the Oncology Department offers a support service with a dedicated bereavement line. Please telephone 01473 704902.

In addition to providing short-term counselling, information about support available to bereaved children can be provided.

Difficulties

If you have specific concerns about the treatment or care of your relative, you can either contact the ward matron concerned or contact the Hospital Advice and Complaints Service on 0800 328 7624 to discuss these concerns further. We encourage you to do this.

Useful telephone numbers

Unfortunately we cannot include every helpline available, but below are a few numbers you may find useful.

We have provided local numbers where possible. An initial contact can often point you in the direction of support closer to home if you live outside Ipswich. Some of the numbers are national help and information lines.

Local

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

01473 704781

Ipswich Hospital Complaints Service

01473 703797

Ipswich Hospital Cancer Bereavement Support

01473 704902

Ipswich Citizens Advice Bureau

01473 219777

Ipswich and Suffolk Coastal Cruse and Young Cruse

01473 230888

19 Tower Street, Ipswich

Drop in Mondays and Wednesdays 10am–12 noon

Age Concern

01473 257039

Good Companions (a social group which meets weekly)

01473 684914

National Association of Widows

01473 254818

Samaritans

01473 211133

Suffolk Inter-faith Resource (SIFRE)

01379 678615

National

Bereavement Register

To remove the name and address of someone who has died from databases and mailing lists.

0870 600 7222

Bereavement Advice Centre

0800 634 9494 or www.bereavementadvice.org

Compassionate Friends

A national helpline for anyone affected by the death of a child at any age

0845 1233 2304

Cruse National Helpline

0870 167 167

Lesbian and Gay Bereavement Helpline

020 7403 5969 Tuesdays 7.30 pm–9.30 pm

Miscarriage Association

01924 200799 or www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk

RoadPeace

National charity for road traffic victims for those bereaved by road death
0845 4500 355 or www.roadpeace.org.uk

Sands – Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society

0845 6520 443 or www.uk-sands.org

The Way Foundation

For those widowed under the age of 50
0870 011 3450 or www.wayfoundation.org.uk

Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide

0844 561 6855 or www.uk-sobs.org.uk

In the event of a death caused through violence, information about specialised support can be obtained from:

Victim Support

0845 3030 900 or www.victimsupport.org

Support after Murder and Manslaughter

0845 872 3440 or www.samm.org.uk

We would like to offer our condolences at this difficult time.

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