

Heads Up for Wellbeing - Bereavement

Experiencing a bereavement is one of the most challenging things we can experience. Find out here what it is and what you can do to cope.



What is bereavement?

Bereavement is a period of mourning or a state of intense grief, especially following the death of a loved one. Experiencing grief can stir a wide mixture of emotions including sadness, anger, fear, relief, guilt, loneliness, worry, numbness, disbelief, shock, and anxiety.

The impact of experiencing a bereavement can impact a young person for many years after the sad event. This can be because as they have matured so has their understanding of death. Significant milestones such as starting high school or sitting exams can trigger a young person to experience grief afresh.

Everyone's experience of grief is different, and the support each person will need is different too.

Grief never leaves us but our ability to live life fully does improve as time passes. Here are some things you can do to help yourself in this process.

The effects of bereavement can impact someone immediately after the event or many years later. They include:

- Appetite fluctuations (eating too much or not enough)
- Sleeping problems (leading to being tired and irritable)
- Imagined illness
- Regression (behaving in a way a younger child would, this brings comfort and a sense of stability)
- Separation anxiety from a loved one
- Lack of confidence
- Loss of focus and concentration
- Feeling like you have no control

Living with grief – self help

Talking helps

It is helpful to talk, both to family and friends. And you may find that you need to repeat and repeat the events of the death in order to make some sense of what has happened. It can often be difficult to talk to family members as they experience grief too. Try to be clear about what you feel you need, and know it is okay to talk to someone you trust not in your family for support.

Managing isolation and difficult feelings

Grief can be very isolating. Finding information about bereavement support, or joining a support group, can help you to realise you are not the only one and that what you are feeling, painful as it may be, is normal. Writing a journal or diary can be a way to express and release feelings too. Look back at your process of grieving over time and note any changes.

Wait before you act

You may have a strong desire to remove all the objects, such as photographs and clothes, belonging to the person who has died because you hurt so much every time you look at them. It is not a good idea to throw anything away until your feelings are less intense. Then you will be able to decide more clearly what you would like to keep.

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Remembering is helpful

Find ways to remember the person who has died. You may feel too raw initially, but looking through photographs, recalling experiences or visiting places you went together can help to focus your grief when you are feeling at a loss and hurting too much. If you cry, remember tears are there for a reason, both to let others know that you need support and to release chemicals that calm you.

Returning to school

Do not expect to be able to perform at your usual capacity; try to take on manageable, short-term tasks as big projects can seem overwhelming. Work can be a useful distraction from grieving, but you are unlikely to be able to switch off completely.

There are no rules in grief. It can help to listen to yourself and learn what works for you. Accept that what helps initially may change over time. Whatever happens, be kind to yourself and give yourself time to heal. Although it may initially seem impossible, with the right support you can adjust to a new way of living.

Bereavement – useful contacts – where to get help

www.childbereavementuk.org

- This web page has resources for young people, family and teachers
- You can live chat and email for support
- There is a helpline 0800 02 888 40
- Links can be found for their app for young people: “Grief Support for Young People”
- Advice for parents to support them discussing the illness or death of a loved one

www.childline.org.uk

- If you're under 19 you can confidentially call, email or chat online about any problem big or small
- Freephone 24h helpline: 0800 1111
- [Sign up for a childline account](#) on the website to be able to message a counsellor anytime without using your email address
- Chat 1:1 with an [online advisor](#)

<http://www.siblingsupport.co.uk/>

- Specialises in supporting young people when the death of a sibling happens
- Helpful personalised 'questions' section to help young people deal with bereavement

<https://www.winstonswish.org/>

- Support children and young people after the death of a parent or sibling
- There is a helpline 08088 020 021 and online chat support too
- Wide range of support materials for parents, teachers and young people