
Grief & Bereavement

Guide about how to handle grief and bereavement

There is little that can prepare you for the loss of a loved one. We hope that the words below may assist.

There are no easy answers to coping with the grief and stress which losing a much-loved member of the family brings and we are all different. However, here are some suggestions which have been compiled by those who have themselves experienced bereavement and they may help families to find their own path to easing the pain a little.

It's important to recognise that we all can respond differently to loss and there are no right or wrongs. For example, it's not an uncommon reaction to experience anger, because bereavement often engenders feelings of fear and helplessness – and fear can show itself as anger. So, if you are feeling angry, try not to feel guilty but understand that you are experiencing a common human reaction. Similarly, if you find yourself being able to draw upon pleasant memories and smile, that's perfectly acceptable too. Many draw comfort from being able to celebrate the life of the person they have lost. You may even find that you experience a mixture of positive and negative emotions – one minute more upbeat and the next in the depths of despair. Whichever reaction you are feeling, try to speak about the person you have lost. They will be uppermost in your mind and it's natural to want to express your feelings and perhaps talk about some memories. Not only that, it makes it much easier for people to talk to you and you may then be able to share some of your burden.

When faced with a bereavement which rocks our personal world on its axis, some people take refuge in denial. It may be a difficult piece of advice to receive, but try to gradually acknowledge and develop an acceptance that your loss has happened and that, sadly, it cannot be changed. It's difficult to

move on to a stage of reconciliation and healing if this does not take place. But give yourself the time you need and so don't feel that you need to rush into the funeral arrangements, unless you want it that way. In addition, take your time if you need to sort out the personal belongings of your loved one. Try to find a balance between undertaking the task when you feel strong enough and not putting it off for ever. Equally, be cautious about making any hasty decisions to move out of your home. It's a big decision and one perhaps best left until the emotions have settled a little, even if it takes a year. If, in the meantime, you want to make changes around the house, go ahead. It is in no way disrespectful to the person you have lost.

Whilst some find them a painful and confusing burden, others find that sorting out the practicalities after a death provide something to focus on. Similarly, some find that throwing themselves into work can bring some welcome rest to the mind, particularly if it involves helping others. Above all, be kind to yourself and do what you want and feel you need to do. You are the one who matters most at the moment and it is important not to let anyone, however well-intentioned, coerce you into doing something that does not fit in with your wishes.

More information and support can be found at the following:

Cruse Bereavement Care provides counselling support and services nationwide and publishes a range of helpful literature, as well as offering a telephone helpline.

0808 808 1677 www.cruse.org.uk

The Samaritans supports families in many ways at times of need through stress or suicidal feelings.

116 123 www.samaritans.org

Age UK supports and promotes the needs of the elderly.

0800 055 6112 www.ageuk.org.uk