



# Dealing with Bereavement

## Factsheet

# Dealing with Bereavement

## *Grief is a natural response to loss*

Grief is a natural response to loss. It's the emotional suffering you feel when someone or something you love, dies. Often, the pain of loss can feel overwhelming. You may experience all kinds of difficult and unexpected emotions, from shock or anger to disbelief, guilt, and profound sadness.

With self-isolation measures in place, and hospital and care homes restricting the contact we can have with patients and residents, some people are losing the opportunity to say goodbye to loved ones.

## *Common reactions*

### **Sadness and shock**

As well as being sad, some people may think about events leading up to a death repeatedly, for example seeing a loved one very poorly.

### **Numbness and exhaustion**

It can feel overwhelming and being able to concentrate or communicate well is difficult. You may feel unable to get on with things without making simple mistakes.

### **Disbelief**

It may feel as though the person who died is going to walk in the room. When you wake up, you may feel that it can't be true.

### **Loneliness**

It can feel like no-one understands what you're going through. You can feel very alone, particularly if you're self-isolating.

### **Physical symptoms**

Some people shake, sweat or can't speak normally. You may get headaches or stomach upsets, and you might feel tense. You can have trouble sleeping or eating normally too.

### **Frightened**

You may worry about more deaths happening and you could feel more stressed about things that you could normally cope with.



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## *Five stages of grief*

**1 Denial**  
The first reaction to learning about the terminal illness, loss, or death of a loved one is to deny it. It's a common defence mechanism that buffers the immediate shock of the loss, numbing us to our emotions.

**2 Anger**  
Being angry energises us to fight against something and gives structure to a situation that may be thrusting us into the unknown. It's easier to be angry than to be sad or in pain.

**3 Bargaining**  
During the time leading up to the loss of a loved one, it can feel as though we would do anything to stop it from happening, including trading places with them if possible. The mind becomes crowded with a flood of "If only..." or "What if..." statements.

**4 Depression**  
There are two types of depression that are associated with mourning:

A reaction to practical implications relating to the loss. Sadness and regret predominate. Worry about the costs and burial. And how we've spent less time with others that depend on us.

The second type of depression is more subtle and perhaps more private. It's our quiet preparation to separate and to bid our loved one farewell.

**5 Acceptance**  
It's not that we no longer feel the pain of loss, we're no longer resisting the reality of the situation. Sadness and regret can still be present in this phase, but the emotional survival tactics of denial, bargaining and anger are less likely to be present.

**Everyone grieves differently. You may or may not experience each stage or go through them in order.**

**The lines of each stage are often blurred. You can move from one stage to the other and possibly back again before fully moving into a new stage.**



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## *Tips to help manage loss*

### Do

- Be kind to yourself
- Try talking about your feelings to a friend, family member, health professional or counsellor – you could also contact a support organisation such as Cruse Bereavement Care
- Consider peer support, where people use their experiences to help each other
- Listen to free mental wellbeing audio guides
- Search and download relaxation and mindfulness apps

### Don't

- Don't try to do everything at once, set small targets that you can easily achieve.
- Don't focus on the things you can't change. Invest time and energy into helping yourself feel better
- You don't have to go through your grief on your own. Most people feel grief after a loss and support is available
- Avoid using alcohol, cigarettes, gambling or drugs to relieve grief. These can all add to poor mental health.

## *What to say (and what to avoid) when someone is bereaved*

Avoid	Instead
Looking for a bright side. Avoid saying, 'At least...'	Acknowledge the pain.
Forcing common experience, you don't know how they feel, even if you've been through it.	Remind them that you're there and you'll listen. Share memories.
Offering unrequested advice. If the person grieving didn't ask what you think, keep thoughts to yourself.	Only offer advice if you have concern for their safety and wellbeing.
Predicting the future. Don't suggest things will get easier.	Be present and open to the pain they're experiencing. They don't need to hide or rush their difficult emotions.

### Help and support is available at Greencore:

- Talk2Us - our peer to peer confidential support service, available on 01246 385290 or [Talk2Us@greencore.com](mailto:Talk2Us@greencore.com)
- Line Manager Framework - bereavement and wellbeing materials are available at <https://managers.greencore.com>
- Occupational Health team (available through HR)
- GroceryAid - confidential helpline for all colleagues in the grocery industry - call 0808 802 1122

# Dealing with Bereavement

## *Boost your happiness*

Simple lifestyle changes to help you feel more in control and able to cope.



### **Manage your stress levels**

If you have a lot of stress in your life, find ways to reduce it. Research time-management techniques, breathing techniques and take regular exercise.



### **Have a healthy lifestyle**

Limiting your alcohol intake, choosing a well-balanced diet, doing some exercise, and getting enough sleep will all improve your mood.



### **Enjoy yourself**

Doing things that you enjoy is good for your emotional wellbeing. Watching sports, taking a warm bath, or meeting friends can all improve your day. Do something you're good at, like cooking or dancing to give a sense of achievement.



### **Talk and share**

Communication is important, whether it's with a friend, family member or counsellor. Talking things through helps you to release tension, rather than keeping it inside.



### **Boost your self-esteem**

The best way to improve your self-esteem is to treat yourself as you would treat a valued friend, in a positive but honest way.



### **Build your resilience**

Resilience allows you to cope with life's ups and downs. Try making something creative out of bad experiences, like writing, painting, or singing. It can help you express pain and get through hard times.



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