

This factsheet provides information on grief and bereavement, as well as the support you can get from local and national organisations.

Grief is a natural response to loss

Each person feels and reacts differently when someone close to them dies. You may feel shock, numbness, overwhelming sadness, tiredness, exhaustion, or even anger or guilt. You may also cry a lot, struggle to concentrate or experience physical symptoms. These are just a few examples; there is no “correct” way to grieve. It is important to remember that feelings like these are normal and not necessarily a sign that you have a mental health problem, particularly in the early stages of grief. While they may feel overwhelming, with time and support you can learn to cope.

How long will the grieving process last?

Grief is a highly individual process and there is no set length of time for it to last. It may last months or even years, but the loss should not always feel as intense as it does in the first few weeks. Birthdays, holidays and anniversaries may be a particularly difficult time even years after the loss occurred. If you experience loss, you should not feel that you have to “get over it” – the grieving process is about accepting your loss and adjusting to life after bereavement.

When does grief become a problem?

While grief is a healthy and normal part of life, sometimes it can affect someone to the extent where they need extra support. If you are experiencing symptoms such as feeling suicidal, engaging in harmful behaviour like excessive drinking, being unable to accept your loss or think of anything else, or struggling to get out of bed, eat or do other everyday tasks, it is a good idea to seek help.

Some people may not seem to grieve much at all and return to their normal life quicker than expected. This may be their natural way of grieving, but may be a sign that they are hiding their feelings in a way that does not give them the opportunity to grieve

properly. There may be many reasons for doing this, and it may feel like the best option at the time, but unresolved grief can develop into other issues such as depression in the long term.

What can help?

Different things will help different people with their grief, but there are some things that have proven to be useful for those who have been bereaved.

It is important that you do not go through grief alone. Whether you get support from loved ones or professionals, having someone to talk to and share your feelings with can be very helpful. You could also do this through writing or creative projects. Try not to suppress your feelings, even if they are painful or confusing, as this can make you feel worse overall.

Don't be afraid to talk about the person who has died – this can help you to grieve their loss. You may want to find ways to remember them or create rituals to honour their life. Looking after your health, taking part in activities and socialising with people can help to lift your mood even if you don't feel like it. Religion and spirituality can help people cope with grief, even if they have not previously held any particular beliefs. Your cultural beliefs about death can also affect how you grieve or help to inform your grieving process.

If you are supporting someone with their grief, remember that everyone grieves differently and it can take a long time. Encouraging them to talk and listening without judgement can make a real difference, as can offering practical support such as help with household chores. However, do not feel you have to act as a counsellor or sacrifice your own wellbeing – there are many specialist sources of help for people who have been bereaved.

What other help is available?

General practitioner (GP)

You can speak to your GP for support with dealing with the effects of grief, both emotional and physical. This may be particularly useful if the person who died was also their patient. Your GP can also refer you onto specialist bereavement services.

Counselling

Bereavement counselling can help you cope with your loss in a healthy way. It will give you the opportunity to talk through your feelings with a trained professional, who can

help you work through your grief and learn ways to manage it. Counselling may be particularly helpful if you do not feel you can talk to those close to you or if your grief is affecting your ability to function in everyday life.

Support groups and forums

Bereavement support groups offer an opportunity to meet other people who are in a similar situation, which can be particularly helpful if you are feeling isolated. Online forums can provide support from the comfort of your own home.

Local organisations that can provide support

Bereavement Care

www.bereavementcareandsupport.co.uk

The Lodge, 64 Pinner Road, Harrow, HA1 4HX

Tel: 020 8427 5720 | Email: admin@bereavementcareandsupport.co.uk

Bereavement Care provides a range of services for bereaved adults, children and young people, and those who care for them. It works in Harrow, Hillingdon and the surrounding areas, and its services include a visiting scheme, support for children and young people, training and a number of local support groups.

Child Bereavement UK (West London)

www.childbereavementuk.org/for-families/support/west-london/

Clare Charity Centre, Wycombe Road, Saunderton, Buckinghamshire, HP14 4BF

Tel: 0800 02 888 40 | Email: support@childbereavementuk.org

Child Bereavement UK supports families and educates professionals when a baby or child of any age dies or is dying, or when a child is facing bereavement. In West London they offer free face to face support at a venue in Ruislip, for individuals and couples bereaved of a child of any age.

Jewish Bereavement Counselling Service

www.jbcs.org.uk

c/o Maurice and Vivienne Wohl Campus, 221 Golders Green Road, London, NW11 9DQ

Tel: 020 951 3881 | Email: enquiries@jbcs.org.uk

The Jewish Bereavement Counselling Service offers counselling to anyone in the Jewish community who is struggling or having difficulties managing after the death of a significant person in their lives, as well as a range of bereavement support groups.

National organisations that can provide support

ASSIST

www.assisttraumacare.org.uk/our-service/traumatic-bereavement

11 Albert Street, Rugby, Warwickshire, CV21 2RX

Tel: 01788 560800 | Fax: 01788 553726 | Email: admin@assisttraumacare.org.uk

ASSIST Trauma Care is a specialist organisation offering therapeutic help to adults and children, individuals and families, affected by a wide range of traumatic occurrences, including bereavement.

Bereavement Advice Centre

www.bereavementadvice.org

Simplify, Heron House, Timothy's Bridge Road, Stratford Upon Avon, CV37 9BX

Tel: 0800 634 9494

Bereavement Advice Centre supports and advises people on what they need to do after a death. You can call their Freephone number Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, for information on practical issues, as well as visiting their website.

Care for the Family

www.careforthefamily.org.uk/family-life/bereavement-support

Garth House, Leon Avenue, Cardiff, CF15 7RG

Tel: 029 2081 0800 | Email: mail@cff.org.uk

Care for the Family is a charity that aims to promote strong family life and help those facing family difficulties. As part of this they offer bereavement support, including specific support for people under 50 (or over 50 if they have dependent children) who have been widowed, parents who have lost a child and anyone in their 20s and 30s who has lost a sibling.

Cruse

www.cruse.org.uk

PO Box 800, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 1RG

Tel: 0808 808 1677 | Email: helpline@cruse.org.uk

Cruse is a charity that offers free information and advice to anyone who has been affected by the death of someone close to them. It provides support and counselling one to one and in groups (including through their helpline); offers education, support, information and publications to anyone supporting bereaved people; and increases public awareness of the needs of bereaved people through campaigning and information services.

Grief Encounter

www.griefencounter.org.uk

The Lodge, 17 East End Road, London, N3 3QE

Tel: 020 8371 8455 | Email: support@griefencounter.org.uk

Grief Encounter supports children and their families through the death of someone close. They run a helpline during office hours, which you can contact via phone or email. They also offer support to families through a two-year programme, as well as online support for young people, information on their website and specialist resources to help facilitate children's grieving.

INQUEST

www.inquest.org.uk

3rd Floor, 89-93 Fonthill Road, London, N4 3JH

Tel: 020 7263 1111 | Fax: 020 7561 0799 | Email: inquest@inquest.org.uk

INQUEST provides specialist advice on deaths in custody or detention or involving state failures in England and Wales. This includes a death in prison, in police custody or following police contact, in immigration detention or psychiatric care.

Muslim Bereavement Support Service

www.mbss.org.uk

PO Box 2241, Ilford, IG1 9UX

Tel: 020 3468 7333 | Email: info@mbss.org.uk

The Muslim Bereavement Support Service serves the Muslim community by supporting them in times of grief after suffering bereavement. They have particular expertise in supporting bereaved mothers who have lost a child at any stage.

Sands

www.sands.org.uk

Victoria Charity Centre, 11 Belgrave Road, London, SW1V 1RB

Tel: 020 7436 5881 | Email: helpline@uk-sands.org

Sands supports anyone who has been affected by the death of a baby before, during or shortly after birth, no matter how long ago the loss occurred. Their services include a helpline, local support groups, an online forum and online and printed information.

Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide

www.uk-sobs.org.uk

Flamsteed Centre, Albert Street, Ilkeston, Derbyshire, DE7 5QU

Tel: 0300 111 5065 | Email: sobs.support@hotmail.com

Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide exists to meet the needs and break the isolation experienced by those bereaved by suicide. Its services include support groups (the

nearest being in London and Watford), a helpline, email support, retreats and a wide range of information on their website.

The Compassionate Friends

www.tcf.org.uk

14 New King Street, Deptford, London, SE8 3HS

Tel: 0345 123 2304 | Email: helpline@tcf.org.uk

The Compassionate Friends (TCF) is a charitable organisation dedicated to the support and care of family members who have suffered the death of a child or children of any age and from any cause. It offers a helpline, local support contacts and meetings, information and resources and supportive events and retreats across the UK.

**Please call Mind in Harrow on 020 8426 0929
for a large print version of this factsheet or a summary translation.**



Mind in Harrow's Mental Health Information Service is a part of SWiSH, a consortium of five local charities, offering the local Care Act Information & Advice Service for Harrow residents, funded by the Council. www.harrowca.org.uk

This factsheet was produced by Mind in Harrow

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