



Organisations

Cruse Bereavement Care

Helpline: 0844 477 9400

www.cruse.org.uk

The Compassionate Friends (UK)

National UK Helpline: 0845 123 2304

www.tcf.org.uk

Lesbian & Gay Bereavement Project

Helpline: 020 7833 1674

www.londonfriend.org.uk/get-support/counselling

The Muslim Council of Britain

Tel 0845 26 26 786

www.mcb.org.uk

The United Synagogue, London

Tel: 020 8343 8989

www.theus.org.uk



How we produce our information

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We rely on a number of sources to gather evidence for our information. All of our information is in line with accepted national or international guidelines where possible. Where no guidelines exist, we rely on other reliable sources such as systematic reviews, published clinical trials data or a consensus review of experts. We also use medical textbooks, journals and government publications.

If you need this leaflet in large print, Braille, audio or different language, please call 0151 556 5570.

If you have a comment, concern, compliment or complaint, please call 0151 556 5203.

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The Clatterbridge
Cancer Centre
NHS Foundation Trust



On experiencing grief

Rehabilitation and Support

A guide for patients and carers

This leaflet explains briefly about bereavement and your feelings in the early days after the death of a loved one.

Bereavement is something, which most of us experience at some time in our lives and loss can be distressing and hard to accept. We may feel confused and overwhelmed by sadness or other strong emotions, including guilt and anger. Sometimes there is relief that a loved one's illness has come to an end. Certainly, in the beginning, there are a few reactions that should be considered as normal.

However, people who are grieving will react differently and not everyone will experience all that is described here. Some feelings may be stronger than others and there is no time limit on how long you may experience the feelings associated with grief. (Reactions may be delayed a little whilst you busy yourself with informing others about the death, comforting others who knew them, 'making arrangements', and so on.)

It is important that you and those around you find your own ways of expressing your feelings. Initially, you may feel shocked or numb, or on the contrary, you may experience everything with increased sensitivity. It is also not unusual to feel as if nothing is different at this moment in time.

Some cultures have strong rituals during this period or in the period immediately prior to death. Rituals differ – some encourage people to display their grief, others to focus grief inwardly.

Sometimes people who are grieving are concerned that they are losing their mind. It may be that you will look for the person in a crowd, or 'see' them sitting in their favourite chair, or heard their voice. You may also have dreams where you are searching for them – this can often happen when you are longing to hear or see someone again.

Physical reactions, such as feeling sick, having flu like symptoms or being more forgetful than usual may also occur for a while. You may feel tired but find it difficult to sleep, or hungry but lack an appetite. You may find it hard to concentrate or easily distracted. Simple problems can be viewed out of all proportion and you may find yourself more likely to panic. These things may be part of grieving. If you find them difficult to cope with, seek advice from your GP, who may be able to help.

Losing someone who has been a big part of your life has other impacts. If they were at home, it may seem very empty. If you were visiting them elsewhere, your routines change. You may feel lonely and isolated. Even family, friends and neighbours might avoid you because they find it difficult to know what to say to you. It may be helpful if you can take the first step. Let them know that you miss their friendship and support as they might miss yours.

Grief starts to ease when you can acknowledge that your own life continues and you are able to give the deceased person an appropriate place in this next phase of your life.

Things to consider

Allow yourself time to grieve, in the way that comes naturally. Remember, there is no right or wrong way to grieve.

Accept help from others. Some family and friends may help with practical matters. Others will be there for you but not know what would help, or how to ask you.

Take care of yourself, try to keep fixed eating and sleeping times. Check with your doctor about any health worries.

When the time feels right, consider setting new routines, looking at areas of importance and interest.

Sharing your feelings can be helpful. It is not always easy to do this with family and friends. If this is so, the support organisations listed on the back cover will be there to help you.

