



BEREAVEMENT

Sutton

What is bereavement?

Bereavement is a distressing but common experience. Most people will be affected by the loss of someone close to us at some point in their lives. Although grief is a very personal thing, the order in which people experience these feelings can be similar. Most people do not need therapy after bereavement but some people may need extra help either from a counsellor or mental health specialist.

Normal grief reaction

Grieving is not just one feeling, but a whole succession of feelings, which take a while to get through and cannot be hurried. People often describe **shock** soon after the death of someone close. Some people describe feeling **numb** or **stunned**. This numbness can help people get through the practical arrangements and family pressures that surround the funeral. Some people worry that they seem **uncaring**. This is just one of the signs of shock and it is most likely that they will feel the impact of the loss at a later stage.

Some people find themselves continually **agitated** and unable to stop or relax at all. These feelings of agitation can lead to **anxiety** and **panic**. Feeling restless and agitated may alternate with feeling **depressed**, **weepy** and **tired**. People may experience a deep yearning for the person they have lost. Some people feel **guilt**, perhaps dwelling on arguments they had with that person or on emotions and words that they wished they had expressed.

It is common for people to **avoid** meeting people for fear of being asked about the person who has died. This can lead to **isolation**. People may find themselves preoccupied with thoughts of joining the person who has died.

However after a time, many people find themselves gradually returning to a kind of routine and their memories of their bereaved become less pervasive and less pre-occupying. These stages of mourning often overlap and show themselves in different ways. Most people should recover from a major bereavement within one or two years. The final phase is “**letting-go**” of the person who has died and the start of a new sort of life. This does not mean forgetting the person.

Unresolved grief reaction

For some people it may prove more difficult to get back to normal, even after months of feeling upset. People may feel **angry** at the person who has died or angry at people involved in their relative's care or angry at themselves. Other people find themselves completely **overwhelmed** and **unable to cope**.

Such reactions may continue for some time and manifest themselves as repeated bouts of depression over many years. If the depression does continue to deepen, affecting appetite, energy and sleep, it may be worth speaking to your GP about antidepressants or a referral for psychological therapy or counselling.

What can you do to help yourself through bereavement?

- **Funeral arrangements** should be considered carefully. Try to have someone with you. Do not feel pressured into a funeral that is too expensive for your budget.
- **Don't make major changes** in your life until you have had time to adjust to the death. This is a time when people may make changes they can regret.
- **Look after your own health**. This is a time when you may become prone to illness. Eat well, rest properly and take extra care.
- **Talk to people** about how you feel. Keep up contacts and relationships, even though this may be hard.



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Useful sources of information and support

There is a lot of information about mental health available on the Internet and in books. Occasionally these are not from reliable sources and may provide mis-information. While service users and mental health professionals have recommended these websites, books and services, we cannot guarantee their quality nor can we take responsibility for the impact that the resources and services will have on you. The websites and books listed here are not an exhaustive list.

Websites

- www.bbc.co.uk/relationships/coping_with_grief/usefulcontacts/grief_index1.shtml
- www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinformation/mentalhealthproblems/bereavement/bereavement.aspx
- www.childbereavement.org.uk/
- www.bereavement.org.uk/
- www.bereavementuk.co.uk
- www.mind.org.uk/Information/Booklets/Understanding/Understanding+bereavement.htm

Books

- Living with Loss by Liz McNeill Taylor ISBN: 1841191051
- I wasn't ready to say goodbye: surviving, coping and healing after the death of a loved one by B. Noel and P. Blair ISBN: 1891400274
- Companion Through the Darkness: Inner Dialogues on Grief by Stephanie Ericsson ISBN: 0060969741
- What to Do When Someone Dies: From Funeral Planning to Probate and Finance ("Which?" Essential Guides) by Paul Harris ISBN: 1844900282

Local non-NHS services Your GP will also be able to advise you of local services and how to contact them

<p>Cruse Bereavement Care Cruse is a charity that specialises in bereavement. They provide a national website with information, a national helpline and local support centres that can provide 1:1 counselling and group support. The service is free, although donations are welcomed.</p> <p>Day by day Helpline 0870 167 1677 Monday to Friday 9.30am to 5pm</p> <p>Branch numbers Richmond: 020 8876 0417 Croydon: 020 8916 0855</p> <p>Website www.cruse.org.uk/</p>	<p>National Association of Widows (NAW) NAW is a self-help organisation, run by widows, for widows, that offers comfort, friendship and a listening ear to widows and unmarried women who have lost a partner through bereavement. There is no local group to Sutton currently, but they are a useful source of information and contacts.</p> <p>Telephone 0845 838 2261</p> <p>Website www.nawidows.org.uk/</p>
<p>The Compassionate Friends (TCF) TCF is an organisation of bereaved parents and their families offering understanding, support and encouragement to others after the death of a child or children. They provide a local befriending service.</p> <p>TCF Helpline 0845 123 2304 Every day 10am to 4.00pm / 6.30pm - 10.30pm</p> <p>Branch numbers Richmond: 020 8876 0417 Croydon: 020 8916 0855</p> <p>Website www.tcf.org.uk/</p>	<p>Private Therapy If you are interested in seeking private therapy it is recommended that you find a therapist through one of these professional bodies:</p> <p>British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) www.bacp.co.uk/seeking_therapist/index.html</p> <p>British Psychological Society (BPS) www.bps.org.uk/e-services/find-a-psychologist/</p> <p>British Association of Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy (BABCP) www.babcp.com/</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Other Useful Numbers</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SaneLine: 0845 767 8000 (Monday- Sunday 1-11pm)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Samaritans: 08457 90 90 90 (everyday, 24 hours)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NHS Direct: 0845 46467 (every day, 24 hours)</p>	