

## Bereavement and Young People

Losing someone close to you is one of the hardest things you can experience in life. If you're young, bereavement can be something you might struggle to face and know how to handle. Support and advice are available to help you get through it.

If someone important to you dies, it can make you feel very alone. If none of your friends have had a similar experience they may not understand or know what to say which could lead you to avoid expressing the way you really feel. If the bereavement is within the family, you might not want to show how you feel and be strong for your loved ones. However they will understand what you're experiencing and want to be there for you too.

Grieving is a natural part of recovering from a bereavement, you may feel like you don't want to accept they are not here anymore. There are no rules about what we should feel, and for how long, you can mourn. Grief comes in many different ways and people often have their own way of coping.

But many people find they feel a mixture of the following:

- sadness
- shock, particularly if the death was unexpected
- relief, if the death followed a long period of illness
- guilt and regret
- anger
- despair and helplessness
- depression

These feelings may be very intense or unlike other experiences you've had before. Time can eventually help these intense emotions subside, and there's no need to feel guilty about starting to feel better. It doesn't mean you're not respecting the person's memory or forgetting about them. For some it might take longer than others and this is perfectly fine. Many different people will need to take their time to process what has happened and find a way of dealing with it. For others they might be able to engage in day to day life without letting it take over, they will also have their own way of coping.

In order to cope effectively when dealing with a bereavement, you need to make sure you look after yourself. Although it might seem like a coping strategy to turn to alcohol or other substances to block it out, this isn't going to benefit the situation or your mental and physical health. Instead you should try to keep busy but also have

time to yourself, this will allow you to still be in touch with day to day life but also have space to be on your own. You also need to make sure you're eating well, as often you may be too focused on the current situation to be hungry or remember to eat regularly.

## Finding support for bereavement

Talking about your grief is an important part of getting through a bereavement. Choosing who to talk to about your feelings is a very personal decision, this is your choice and you should feel completely comfortable sharing this information with that person. If you've lost a family member, someone else in your family may also be good to open up to because they're likely to understand how you're feeling.

### **If you'd rather talk to someone professional or not involved in the current situation you have many options including:**

**Websites and blogs** - such as Hope Again, a website for young people going through a bereavement, where you can find information, read other people's experiences, and add your own if you want to; the Winston's Wish and Child Bereavement Charity websites also offer information and advice.

**Helplines** - including Bereavement Trust Helpline who offer support for anyone who has or is suffering from a bereavement [www.bereavement-trust.org.uk](http://www.bereavement-trust.org.uk) or 0800 435 455 and the Cruse Bereavement young people's helpline on 0808 808 1677.

**Your GP** - especially if you're concerned you're not coping, might be depressed, have trouble eating or sleeping, are thinking about hurting yourself, or you're not starting to feel better after a few months: they may suggest you have counselling.

**A teacher or tutor** - you may be distracted or find it hard to concentrate at school or college for a while, so talking to a teacher you feel comfortable with can help them understand what you're going through and take a bit of pressure off you; special circumstances, such as bereavement, can sometimes be taken into account if you're having trouble with coursework or exams.

Sometimes you will have a really awful day when you feel you can't cope. You will feel anxious, tearful and tired, as grief is very exhausting. But you will also have really great days when you feel very hopeful and optimistic. Right now, you may be having more bad days than good, but this will reverse in time. Don't feel guilty if you have a day when you don't think about the person that passed. You don't have to be sad all the time! Give yourself permission to be happy.

The only thing that can really heal the pain of your grief is time. In a year, things could look very different, in five years... who knows? Look to the future, you won't be blamed for moving forward.

Here at Skills for Security our Safeguarding Lead is Sadie Done. If you ever need someone to talk to regarding any issues that could affect your health and wellbeing feel free to call us on

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