



WELL-BEING TEAM

Advice and support booklet



**Bereavement care for you
and your family**

You can contact the Well-Being Team by
phone on 0121 465 2000 or by email at
jth.wellbeing@nhs.net

Helping you through your bereavement

Bereavement affects individuals and families in many different ways. Each family member will have their own methods of handling this - some people can be open about their feelings while others withdraw. Not everyone will have family or friends to support them.

The way to understand grief is to try to understand the person who is experiencing it and the relationship that he or she had with the person who has died.

Common reactions to bereavement

Grief is a normal reaction to loss for both adults and children. It is an individual experience which affects us all in different ways – emotionally, physically, socially and in many practical areas of life.



Emotionally

The range of emotions felt following a bereavement are vast and varied. Some of the more common emotions felt are guilt, anger, relief, despair, apathy and loneliness. Some people feel too numb to experience any emotions for a while.

Physically

You may notice changes in sleeping patterns and appetite. Some people feel panicky and restless. You may feel exhausted, especially if you have been providing care. Your immune system could be low and you may be prone to infections.

Socially

Bereavement can sometimes set people apart from friends, relatives and neighbours who may think you are coping as you have family and friends supporting you. No-one can replace that person who has died. You can feel isolated and very alone in your grief.

Would it surprise you that all of these reactions are normal and healthy grief reactions? However, any one of these reactions or emotions can feel overwhelming. It is okay to express these feelings in a safe way and it can sometimes help to talk to people such as a friend, GP or health professional.

Many people manage their own grief with the help and support of family, friends and others. Some people may find it helpful to seek support outside of these circles so they can talk about their feelings and what has happened to them. This can be useful if your style of coping is different from those around you. You can sometimes feel very alone, even though you have people around you.

Looking after yourself

Listed below are some techniques that have been helpful to some of our clients in the past. You may find one or more which are helpful for you:

- It is OK to express your feelings
- It is OK not to express your feelings (not talking)
- It is OK not to cry if you have no tears
- It is important to make time to rest, think and sleep, as well as having time with family and friends
- Try to avoid major decisions if you can and go at your own pace
- Try to let children share your grief and encourage them to express their feelings - maybe by talking, reading books, drawing or playing
- Be gentle with yourself. If you are having a bad day remember that tomorrow is another day
- Be patient with yourself. Try not to compare yourself to others
- If you are hurting, admit it and go with the pain
- Ask for help, accept help
- Keep to a routine to help you get through the day. This is especially useful for children
- Introduce pleasant changes into your life
- Schedule activities to get you through the worst times e.g. anniversaries, weddings and special dates that you shared
- Accept your feelings as normal
- Find different ways of expressing your feelings e.g. exercising, writing your feelings or thoughts in a journal, listening to or playing music
- Eat regularly
- Ask questions about what happened. It may help you to have the facts
- Remind yourself you are not going crazy - sleeping, eating, thinking, remembering, concentration and motivation will be up and down
- Keep something that belongs to the person and start a memory box
- Laugh and have fun without feeling guilty or bad about it

Counselling and support

Counselling and support are available for both adults and children and can be arranged either at the hospice or another venue. Home visits are also available. Our bereavement counsellors and support volunteers are highly trained and our volunteers receive ongoing supervision. You or any family member can access our services now or at any time in the future. There is no charge for this service.

Talking to someone who is trained in the art of listening can help you to express how you feel and you can often begin to find your own solutions to your problems. Being listened to by someone who shows empathy and acceptance can help you to explore any issues that are worrying you and you may develop a greater understanding of your feelings, thoughts and behaviours.

Support for children is provided by an accredited therapist. This can be in the form of one-to-one counselling sessions or in sibling or family groups. We can also provide advice and resources to help support parents and guardians.

We can provide information, advice and signposting to other organisations that may be helpful to you.

Please pass this information onto your family.



Useful contacts

Cruse Bereavement Care

Offers help and support for bereaved people through a range of services including telephone and face-to-face support, groups and support for children and young people. Visit the website page or your nearest office to find out what is on offer in your area.

Website: www.cruse.org.uk

Helpline: 0808 808 1677

Birmingham helpline: 0121 687 8010

Email: birmingham@cruse.org.uk

Childhood Bereavement Network

Provides information, guidance and support to children and young people and their families.

Website: www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk

Phone: 020 7843 6309

Email: cbn@ncb.org.uk

Siblink

Siblink is a network for young people aged 13-25 who have, or have had, a family member affected by cancer. Siblink is active online as a forum and information store.

Website: www.siblinks.org

Samaritans

Provides free confidential, non-judgemental, emotional support 24 hours a day for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair.

Website: www.samaritans.org

Phone: 116 123

Email: jo@samaritans.org

Winston's Wish

Helps children to rebuild their lives after the death of a parent or sibling. Winston's Wish also supports families and the professionals who support them.

Website: www.winstonswish.org

Freephone national helpline: 08088 020 021

Email: ask@winstonswish.org

Marie Curie

If you've been diagnosed with a terminal illness or you're supporting someone who has, Marie Curie can offer a range of information and support online, through its freephone support line or via web chat.

Website: www.mariecurie.org.uk

Support line: 0800 090 2309

Citizens Advice

Offers free confidential advice online, over the phone and in person.

Website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk

National advice line: 03444 111 444

Deceased Preference Service

For help to stop unwanted mail addressed to your deceased loved one. By registering with the service, the majority of junk mail will be stopped.

Website: www.deceasedpreferenceservice.co.uk

Phone: 0800 068 4433

Macmillan Cancer Support

Provides physical, financial and emotional support to help people with cancer live life as fully as they can.

Website: www.macmillan.org.uk

Freephone: 0808 808 00 00