



Bereavement

Life following the loss of a loved one



Working together to improve the diagnosis, treatment and quality of life for all those affected by arrhythmias

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Glossary

Bereavement A period of mourning after a loss, especially after the death of a loved one

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) A talking therapy that can help you manage your problems by changing the way you think and behave

Counsellor A person trained to listen to people's problems and to help them find ways of dealing with them

Grief Mental suffering over a loss

Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) A service to help locate a counsellor

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Bereavement

This resource is to benefit those who have sadly lost a loved one. We hope that it will help you to begin to come to terms with your loss, offer some advice with the practicalities, and also help you to offer consolation to those who are struggling with their loss.

When someone dies it is one of the most distressing experiences we will ever face. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. It is a very individual emotion. The Kubler-Ross Grief Cycle (1969) suggests there are five stages to grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance.

Denial: Denial can help us to survive the loss of a loved one. During the Denial stage, we try to find a way to simply get through each day. Denial helps us to pace our feelings of grief. It is nature's way of letting in only as much as we can handle. As we accept the reality of the loss, we are beginning the healing process. We are becoming stronger and the denial is beginning to fade.

Anger: Anger is a necessary stage of the healing process. You are trying to adjust to a new reality and likely to be experiencing extreme emotional discomfort. Allow yourself to feel the anger. The more you feel it, the sooner you will heal. Anger has no limits. It can reach your friends, the doctors, your family, yourself and even the loved one who has died.

Bargaining: It is common when coping with loss to feel so desperate that you are willing to do almost anything to alleviate or minimize the pain. During the bargaining stage, you might direct your requests to a higher power or something bigger that may be able to influence a different outcome. It is common to recall times when you might have said something you did not mean and wish you could go back and behave differently.

Depression: Sadness is a natural response to bereavement, but some people may become depressed. Often, one's life can feel as if there is no purpose or meaning which can result in depression. Although it might seem unbearable at the time, this is a period when some inner healing takes place, and afterwards, some people say they feel lighter, more in control and better able to look forward.

Acceptance: When you eventually come to a place of acceptance, it is not that you no longer feel the pain of loss, it means you are no longer resisting the reality of the situation. Sadness and regret can still be present, but the emotional survival tactics of denial, bargaining, and anger are less likely to be present.



You might find that you experience physical changes. These can include:

- Difficulty in sleeping
- Vivid dreams
- Loss of appetite
- Feeling tense, edgy and restless
- Feeling slow or lethargic



You might feel exhausted, especially if you were caring for the person who died or if you went through a difficult time before their death. Strong emotions and dealing with all the practical things that need to be done after a death can also leave you tired and drained.

Take extra care of yourself. Try to eat well and get some rest even if you cannot sleep. Take some exercise. Go for a walk if you can. Try not to do too much while you are grieving.

Give Yourself Time

Talking and sharing your feelings is extremely important as family and friends are there to support you, you do not have to go through this experience alone. A bereavement counsellor is often used as this person can give you the time and space to share your feelings.



Practical Advice

In the first few days after the passing of a loved one you may feel numb or some extreme emotions, however there are some practical things that need to be done.

- You will need a medical certificate, so you can register the death, this can be obtained from your GP or the hospital
- You need to register the death within the first five days, this is so you have the correct paperwork to proceed with the funeral. Most use a funeral director, but you can organise the funeral yourself
- If someone dies abroad, either whilst working or on holiday, you need to register the death in the country where they died. Normally the British Consulate will help you in matters such as this
- If the death is unexpected or sudden, there may be a need for a post mortem or inquest. This can delay the funeral and, often, the grieving process
- It is best not to make any significant decisions for twelve months. Decisions made during this time are rarely objective and balanced. If possible put on hold any decision that involves a large expenditure
- If you feel ready, you might consider returning to work. You might be naturally inclined to shut down and do nothing, but being productive can help in the healing process. By focusing on tasks, you can shift your mind from the distress for set periods of time. Do not confuse this with ignoring your grief though. Work should only be used as a temporary distraction



Dealing With Loneliness

If you are religious, perhaps you might find it helps to contact your local church or place of religious denomination. Many have regular meetings and may even offer to arrange transport if you are not mobile.

Remember that it is often thoughtlessness that causes people to forget to call rather than ill will. A gentle reminder “would you like to come round for a cup of tea?” will be all they need to know that you need company. Although it might seem like an effort, it is preferable to be proactive than spending too much time alone.

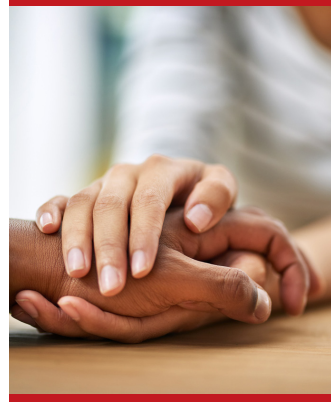
Consider volunteering. It is an excellent way to meet new people in a natural environment. Volunteering is proven to have enormous physiological benefits.



Advice For Friends And Relatives

Do's

- ♥ Pick up the phone to, or arrange to visit; the grieving person may be feeling alone
- ♥ Encourage the person to talk, it may only be via text or email but it all helps
- ♥ Listening is important to the person; they may be re-living the event
- ♥ Allow the bereaved to be themselves, allow them to show their feelings
- ♥ Be patient as grief can take a long time
- ♥ Special anniversaries and birthdays are particularly difficult for the bereaved, so make a note of them and give them a ring or send an email
- ♥ Mention useful support charities; some of these are included at the back of this publication
- ♥ Offer useful and practical help
- ♥ Suggest Bereavement Support –



They can claim Bereavement Support Payment if:

- The bereavement happened on or after 06 April 2017
- They are under the state pension age
- It has been under three months since

For help on how to claim,
phone the Bereavement Service helpline on 0800 731 0469

Advice For Friends And Relatives

Don'ts

- Please do not avoid someone who has been bereaved
- Never say “I understand how you feel”, “You’ll get over it”, “time heals”; this is often not helpful for the person grieving
- Do not tell them it’s time to move on, or they should be over it – everyone grieves in a different way and you will need to be patient and understanding
- Ensure you look after yourself as it can be emotionally draining caring for someone bereaved



Children

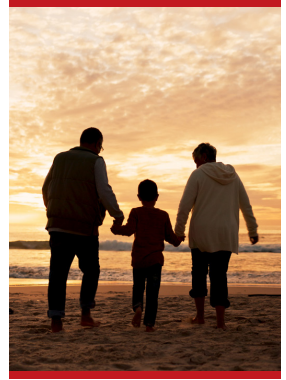
For some children and young people, the death of a parent, sibling or grandparent can be a traumatic and difficult experience. Often, they will be confused and not understand what has happened. We often say children are resilient and they will move on quickly. However, this is not always the case. Even babies can experience loss. A baby cannot process the implications of the death, but that does not mean that they do not feel the loss.

Children and young people need the time to grieve in the same way as any adult. Do not try to ignore or distract the child's grief; it can be damaging. Children and young people, regardless of age, need to be encouraged to talk about how they are feeling. Many schools help to support children and young adults with bereavement. It is important for schools to be aware of a bereavement so they can support the young person. Some schools will also have a counselor who can help the young person.

Grieving when you have children

It is sometimes good for children to see that it's normal to feel sad and cry. Pay attention if your child wants to share their feelings, whether it's through talking, drawing or games. Children need to feel they're listened to, so include them in decisions and events if appropriate and if it feels right.

People who are grieving the loss of their child find this very difficult. Talking, finding support and supporting spouses, siblings, friends and family is important. Everyone is grieving the loss. It is important to take time together and seek outside help if the situation becomes stressful.



Adjusting

When someone dies, we must adjust to living in a world which has irrevocably changed.

It will take time for a person to come to terms with the death of loved one and it will be different for each mourner. How we react will be influenced by many different things, including:

- age
- personality
- cultural background
- religious beliefs
- previous experience of bereavement
- personal circumstances

No one can tell you how or when the strength of your grief will lessen; only you will know when this happens. Often, just as you believe that your grief is becoming bearable, and you think that you are finally moving towards acceptance, you might experience a strong and often unwanted emotion similar to that which you experienced shortly after the death.

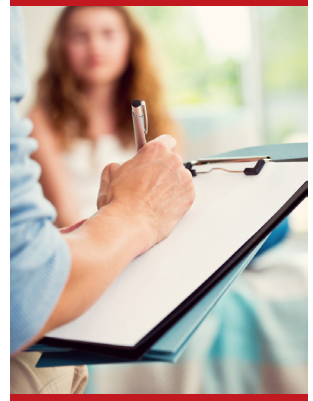
After a bereavement, life will have changed, but the pain and grief should lessen. There will be a time when you are able to adapt and adjust and cope with life without that person. When someone we are close to passes away, we will find the sense in life again, but will never forget their importance to us and how special they were.

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT)

Cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) is a psychological approach whose effectiveness has been most clearly established in research trials, and for this reason it is recommended as the treatment of choice by NICE (The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) for a wide range of physical health conditions.

Some more recent variants of CBT, especially those which incorporate ideas of mindfulness and acceptance are increasingly being advocated. More traditionally associated with Eastern philosophies, these have been demonstrated to have a direct impact on our physiology, as well as a patient-reported quality of life.

CBT can be very effective in helping to address anxiety and depression related to various conditions. This talking therapy can help you understand the things that trigger and contribute to your experience of grief related emotional reactions. There is evidence that Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) results in improvements in emotional distress. CBT is available as an NHS treatment and is provided by Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT). There are free online resources dedicated to CBT and medication.



Frequently Asked Questions

What do I do when I feel completely alone?

Reach out to loved ones including friends, family, work colleagues. Though you may not feel like socialising or being with anybody right now, it is very important to talk to somebody about your feelings and emotions. It does not help to keep everything bottled up. If you feel that you cannot speak with people you know, you can talk to your GP who might put you in touch with a counsellor or charity who can listen to you. Alternatively, you can refer yourself directly to a psychological therapies service on the NHS (England only). There are bereavement charities and services whom you can contact with number provided at the end of this booklet.

I don't feel like I can ever overcome this grief, what do I do?

Nobody is expecting you to be able to deal with the grief you are feeling straight away, and everybody takes different amounts of time to process grief. Do not put any pressure on yourself to feel better immediately, and let your body and emotions go through the natural process of grieving. If you are feeling very low, and possibly depressed or suicidal, it is very important to see your doctor who will be able to help you through this difficult period.

I can't shake the feeling of guilt, what should I do?

As mentioned previously in this booklet, the feeling of guilt surrounding a loved one's death is normal but can be a terrible feeling. Take comfort in knowing that you did everything you could to help your loved one, and ultimately could not change what has happened. Try to remember the good times you shared, and talk to people around you about how you are feeling.

It is normal following a bereavement to feel the sadness and grief of loss. There are times in life when we all may need help, particularly following the death of a loved one. There are health professionals, charities and therapies which can help. You can talk with your local health care professional or GP if you need help, or self-refer to many organisations.

Support Charities

Name	Website	Telephone
Age UK	www.ageuk.org.uk	0800 678 1602
Cruse	www.cruse.org.uk	0808 898 1677
Child Bereavement	www.childbereavementuk.org	0800 028 8840
Samaritans	www.samaritans.org	116 123
Winston Wish	www.winstonswish.org	0808 802 002
Mind	www.mind.org.uk	
The Good Grief Trust	www.thegoodgrieftrust.org	

This booklet has been written to benefit those who have lost a loved one, and their support network. Without donations and fundraising, we would not be able to provide support through our award-winning resources and helpline

Please donate to support our vital work at
www.hearhythmalliance.org/aa/uk/get-involved/donate



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“I felt so lonely and isolated, the booklet helped me to understand the emotions I was feeling”

Enid, Gloucestershire

To view our patient resources, scan the QR code below:



Please remember that this publication provides general guidelines only. Individuals should always discuss their condition with a healthcare professional. If you would like further information or would like to provide feedback, please contact us.

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