

LIVINGGRIEF

Let's talk about grief...

Understanding bereavement

Bereavement is something that most people will experience in their lives and everyone reacts to their loss in their own unique way.

Grief can be very painful and may give rise to feelings and thoughts that you don't expect.

We hope you find the information in this leaflet helpful.



Grieving for **someone close**

The death of someone close can sometimes seem like the most painful thing that has ever happened to you. It can feel bewildering and even frightening. Grief is a natural reaction to loss.

There is no right or wrong way to grieve. Most people will experience similar feelings – initial shock, disbelief and numbness, through to periods of utter confusion, intense pain and questioning.

There may be anger, regrets, a sense of searching for the person who has died and feeling very alone. Sometimes you may feel very overwhelmed and at other times more in control and able to get on with day to day activities.

Grieving is not usually a smooth process; you may go from one feeling to another and back again. It takes time to adjust gradually to life without the person who has died. The time this takes varies; there is not a definitive timescale as to how long this will be.

Feelings, thoughts and **experiences**

Even if you know someone is going to die, it is still a shock when it actually happens and you may have trouble believing they won't be coming back.

You might dream about them or even think you see the person again. It may take time for you to make an emotional adjustment to the knowledge that they have died. Grief can bring up powerful and unexpected feelings and thoughts and you may feel overwhelmed at times.

Some **common feelings** are

- Sadness
- Anxiety
- Agitation and feeling irritable
- Anger – with the person who has died, or for being left alone
- Guilt and regret
- Fear
- Remorse
- Panic
- Loneliness
- Depression
- Confusion
- Numbness or emptiness
- Feeling mentally and physically drained
- Disappointment about hopes that cannot be realised
- Despair

You may swing between extremes of emotions and feel out of control. You may feel unable to imagine a future without your loved one in it. Flashbacks and dreams are common. This can be distressing and frightening but is not unusual and may form an important part of how you process your loss.


You may have difficulty concentrating, sleeping or eating. Although you may not feel like eating, it is important not to neglect your health and wellbeing.

If you are worried about your health, you may wish to talk to your GP. You may feel a need to know why this has happened and your thoughts may go over and over events leading up to the death.

Bereavement brings major life changes – you may feel not only the loss of your relative or friend but a feeling of a loss of confidence and identity and purpose.

All these are reactions to bereavement and are not a sign that you cannot cope any more.

Things you can do to **help yourself**

- Grief can be very tiring so it is important that you are gentle with yourself and don't expect to be as organised as you usually are.
 - Take good care of yourself; get lots of rest, eat well and give yourself time to grieve.
 - You may be tempted to make big changes in your life. Most people find that this is not the best time to do so – what seems right now may not feel right in a few months time.
 - Talk through what has happened and how you are feeling with someone you trust.
 - Contact your GP if you feel unwell or would like your doctor to refer you to someone to talk to.
 - Try to bring into the open whatever you are feeling. Crying can bring relief.
 - Do contact the hospice or other voluntary organisations or religious groups if you would like someone to talk to – they are there to help you.
 - Maintain relationships that are important to you – time spent with people who care about you is an important part of getting through difficult times. Accept offers of time and support if you can.
 - Do things you enjoy – spend time in the garden, go for a walk, maintain a hobby – remember it is OK to find joy in life and living even though you are grieving.
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When you lose someone you love, life cannot ever be the same again. Things may even feel so bad that you can't see any prospect of them getting better.

Grieving takes time – time to adjust to a different life without that person and time to learn to lead a different life.

Although you won't forget the person you loved, with time you can find a way of holding onto your memories of them while finding hope in a future without them.

Children grieve too

Children have thoughts and feelings which they may express in different ways. They may want to draw pictures or to tell stories. It is not possible to protect children from feeling sad, angry and hurt but by talking to them and including them in what is going on, they can be helped to understand what has happened.

For more information on how to help children, contact the emotional wellbeing team on 0300 303 5196, or emotionalwellbeing@stelizabethhospice.org.uk.

If you need help

If at any time you feel that you need help during your bereavement please contact the emotional wellbeing team at St Elizabeth Hospice on 0300 303 5196 (Monday to Friday 9am – 4pm) or emotionalwellbeing@stelizabethhospice.org.uk.

For details of what the service offers and who to contact, please see the separate leaflet “Help during your bereavement” – **an introduction to bereavement services at St Elizabeth Hospice.**

Other organisations that can help

Helplines

First Response – 0808 196 3494
Emergency helpline, open 24 hours a day

Samaritans – 116 123 (free) - www.samaritans.org
Emergency helpline, open 24 hours a day

Childline – 0800 1111 - www.childline.org.uk
Emergency helpline, open 24 hours a day

The Silver Line – 0800 4 70 80 90 - www.thesilverline.org.uk
Confidential free helpline for people aged 55 and over

Counselling services

UK Council for Psychotherapy – 020 7014 9955
www.psychotherapy.org.uk
Directory of private UKCP accredited counsellors

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy – 01455 883300
www.bacp.co.uk
Directory of private BACP accredited counsellors

Counselling Directory - 0333 325 2500
www.counselling-directory.org.uk

Suffolk Mind – 0300 111 6000 - www.suffolkmind.org.uk
Counselling to improve mental health

Jewish Bereavement Counselling Service – 020 8951 3881
www.jbcs.org.uk
Counselling service for bereaved individuals offering telephone and skype counselling

Suffolk Cruse Bereavement Care – www.suffolkcruse.co.uk 01473 230888
Offer practical advice, counselling, groups, leaflets and publications

Asian Family Counselling Service – 020 8574 0912
www.asianfamilycounselling.org
A confidential counselling service for individuals, couples and families of Asian communities

Muslim Community Helpline – 020 8904 8193 and 020 8908 6715
www.muslimcommunityhelpline.org.uk

Support groups

WAY foundation for under 50's (Widowed and Young)
www.widowedandyoung.org.uk
A peer support group for men and women aged 50 or under when their partner died

The Compassionate Friends – 0345 123 2304 - www.tcf.org.uk
A charitable organisation dedicated to the support of bereaved family members who have suffered the death of a child of any age, and from any cause

Bereavement UK - www.bereavement.co.uk
Offers a support forum and live chatroom run by others who have suffered bereavement

Support for young people

Winston's Wish – 0808 802 0021 - www.winstonswish.org
Supporting bereaved children and their families

Hope again – 0808 808 1677 - www.hopeagain.org.uk
Youth website of Cruse Bereavement Care

Grief Encounter – 0808 802 0111 - www.griefencounter.org.uk
A website offering guidance on what to expect in bereavement during childhood.

How much **does it cost?**

All emotional and spiritual wellbeing services at St Elizabeth Hospice are free. St Elizabeth Hospice is a registered charity and relies on gifts and donations to carry out its work. Because of people's generosity we are able to offer bereavement support free of charge to the relatives and friends of hospice patients.

Tell us what you think

Hearing about your experience of St Elizabeth Hospice can help us to improve our services and provide better care and support for those who need it.

To make a comment or complaint, or to compliment us on something we've done well, please write to us or visit stelizabethhospice.org.uk

Contact **us**

0300 303 5196

emotionalwellbeing@stelizabethhospice.org.uk

stelizabethhospice.org.uk

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