

A stylized illustration of several people in profile, facing right. The figures are rendered in various colors: white, pink, brown, and blue. The background is a solid light green. The text is overlaid on a horizontal band across the middle of the image.

after someone dies

A leaflet about death, bereavement and grief for young people



What is bereavement?

Bereavement simply means losing someone through death. It could be one of your parents, grandparents, brothers or sisters, friends, boyfriend or girlfriend – anyone who is important to you.

What might I feel?

The feelings that we have after someone close has died can be called grief. Everyone experiences grief differently – there is no 'right' way to feel. Feelings can include shock, numbness, despair, intense sadness, guilt, depression, relief, fear, anger. It can sometimes feel as if we're thrown from one feeling to another to another.

It's not unusual to feel numb, which means feeling like you have no feelings at all.

'My dad died a week ago ...I'm just in a dream hoping my dad will come home but knowing he won't.'

*'I feel so lost and confused, it's like all the world came crashing down, **I didn't think I would ever stop crying.** Now I just feel so hurt and upset.'*

*'**Why did she have to die?** I needed her. It's just not fair. Death no longer makes me sad, it makes me angry.'*

'How can I cope with it all...?'

It can feel like the bottom has dropped out of your world, that nothing good will ever happen again. How can you begin to cope?

*'My mother died 3 years ago. **I never used to speak about her.** Now, I can talk about her and be proud of the time I shared with her. Whether I feel her every moment or not, I know she is always here with me.'*

*'**My dad died a month ago. I miss him so much, I can't cope with everyday things like going to college. I just want my dad back, is that too much to ask?'***

Many young people find that they can't get on with day-to-day activities. Even small things like getting out of bed, going to school, talking to friends can somehow seem enormous. Sometimes you might find that you get behind with

school, college or work because you just can't concentrate. Life can just feel 'too much'. This is a common reaction. It might help to explain to someone how you're feeling – maybe a teacher you trust, a friend, someone in your family. If people know what you're going through, they are more likely to understand why you might be acting differently from normal.

'I feel so alone...'

When you're going through something so painful, it can be hard to believe that anyone else can understand. This can lead to feeling isolated, and finding it hard to talk to friends and family.

'The worst part is the loneliness. Nobody knows how I feel. I just wish I had someone to talk to.'

'After my sister died I got bullied because I kept crying. Things got better when I told someone.'

'I feel empty, lost, confused and lonely. I need someone to talk to but don't know who.'

Although it can seem really difficult, finding someone to talk to about how you're feeling can be an important first step in coming to terms with the death of someone close. Not everyone will understand but many will. People usually like to be asked for help, so you might be surprised that your friends or family are willing to listen and to support you as best they can.



If someone in your family has died it may mean a lot of changes at home. Everyone can feel so caught up by what's going on for them individually that it can be hard to talk to each other. In fact, sharing how you're feeling can be a good way to support each other during this really difficult time.

*'After 2 years I've only just learnt that **when I cry and talk about things it really helps.**'*

'I was lucky to have a teacher who really seemed to care. She made life easier by explaining to the other kids what had happened, and by being there for me when I needed it.'

If talking to someone you know seems too big a step, it might be easier to talk to someone whose job it is to listen.

You can ring Cruse's freephone number on 0808 808 1677 to chat to a trained helpline adviser. Or you can go to www.rd4u.org.uk to send a private e-mail to one of our trained volunteers, and read about how other young people have coped in your situation.

What can help?

There is no magic wand to make the pain go away or to bring life back to normal. But there are things that some young people have found do help to ease the pain, and help them to come to terms with their loss.

*'I am writing this listening to a tape which I made shortly after my Mum died with songs which remind me of her. **I have found this a great help when I am feeling down** - I am always crying by the end of it, but I always feel better too.'*

*'When he died I was really screwed up, so I wrote poems about it. **I find it easier to write than to talk.** If I hadn't, I wouldn't be here now.'*

*'I recommend that **anyone in my situation should** put any memories (letters, badges, I put in some dried petals from the rose I put on her coffin - anything really) into a box with a lock on. Every now and again, unlock the memory box and refresh your memory.'*

*'How about getting a helium balloon with a message for her attached and letting that go? Some people find that really helpful. Or you could write her a letter and keep it just between you and her? I keep a diary where **I write messages to my brother when I feel I need to, that helps me a lot.**'*

*'Every year on the anniversary of his death **she watches his favourite film.** She says she can picture him smiling and sometimes hear him laughing at his favourite bits!'*

How long will it take?

Grieving is such an individual process that it's impossible to say how long it 'should' take. Feelings tend to come and go in circles, so that some people worry that they're feeling sad again, or angry, or guilty, when they thought they'd 'got over' that feeling. What most people do find, though, is that gradually, over time, things do get easier.

*'All I can say is be patient with yourself. There's no magic pill, no words, no secret recipe. **Give yourself time! Grieve in your own time and at your own pace.**'*

And remember, you are allowed to have fun and to laugh! This does not mean that you will ever forget the person who has died, or that they will be less important to you.

*'I feel like my mother's spirit is always near me and these things make me carry on, **I love my life now, I hope you can carry on like I did.**'*

*'**Don't give yourself a time limit, everybody grieves differently and for different lengths of time.** I'm still grieving for my mum after 4 years but in different ways. It's a long, hard journey. But what's certain is that the pain will ease gradually.'*

Young People's Helpline
Freephone 0808 808 1677

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