

Bereavement Leaflet

The death of someone close is likely to be one of the most distressing experiences we face. Grief is a natural reaction which allows us to begin to come to terms with our loss. Grief can express itself in many different ways and is often accompanied by very powerful, frightening and confusing feelings. It is common for those feelings to ebb and flow over a period of time, sometimes for several years but gradually most people begin to cope on a day-to-day basis.

Shock, numbness and disbelief

These feelings can be experienced in the period soon after a death. Numbness may provide temporary protection and we may feel quite calm and detached. After a death there is so much to do – relatives to be contacted, death certificates to be organised, paperwork to be gone through, a funeral to be prepared – and while we are so preoccupied with these demands we may not be able to take in the reality of our loss.

Sadness and turmoil

We cannot be protected from the fact that the loss may hurt or disorientate us. We may lose confidence. It may make us feel unsafe, frightened, sad, regretful and empty. We may be unprepared and unwilling for the changes in our lives and feel anxious, confused and alone. We may feel tearful, crying unexpectedly is quite normal.

Despair and depression

Grieving is hard work. It takes time and energy. We may frequently feel exhausted or we may suffer health problems. However, unless grief is allowed to follow its course it may bring risks to mental and physical health with the possibility of our personal relationships being affected. There may be times when it seems hard to find anything to live for, when we feel that there is little point going on and that nobody understands us. It can be a very lonely time. We rarely have any idea whether when or how our grieving will end. It is however a natural human experience.

Anger and guilt

Grief often brings anger and guilt. We may feel anger that the person died, anger that we have been left behind or anger that family and friends have not been sufficiently supportive. If we believe that the person who died was not well cared for, anger may be directed at figures of authority such as doctors, nursing or caring staff. We often feel the need to find someone to blame. Sometimes too, anger may be self-directed and we feel guilt perhaps linked to things we have or haven't said or done. We ask ourselves what we could have done differently. Sharing these thoughts with others may help to resolve these feelings.

Use your support network

Support from family friends and work colleagues is immensely valuable immediately after the death and as we grieve and gradually adjust. The pain of bereavement has been compared to the experience of losing a limb, it doesn't come back, we will always miss it but we can learn and adapt to living without it. Our hope is to be able to cope eventually with daily life and to keep continuing bond with those we have lost.

What you can do to help yourself

- Accept that it is normal not to feel normal
- Let yourself experience the feelings you have and talk to others about them
- You may need to find out more about the person's death if all the facts around the death are not clear
- Remember the importance of eating, sleeping, exercising and relaxing
- Take time to reflect and remember

Next steps

- Register the death:
https://www.hounslow.gov.uk/info/20084/births_deaths_marriages_citizenship_and_cemeteries/1326/register_a_death
- Arrange Funeral: <https://www.gov.uk/after-a-death/arrange-the-funeral?step-by-step-nav=4f1fe77d-f43b-4581-baf9-e2600e2a2b7a>

List of organisations to contact

There is a “tell us once” service for local government that will inform any government department e.g., HMRC, department of work and pensions, passport office etc https://www.gov.uk/after-a-death/organisations-you-need-to-contact-and-tell-us-once	
Bank, building society, credit cards	
Place of work (occupational pension)	
GP	
Executors of the estate (will)	
Insurance companies	
Landlord, housing department	
Electricity, gas, telephone, water companies	
Royal mail, newsagent and milk deliveries	
Priest, vicar, minister or faith leader	
Schools, college or university attended	
Residential or nursing home	
Library service	
Careline (personal alarm service)	
Carers or home help	
Cancel any appointments	
Community equipment service	

Contacts

Contact	Telephone Number	Email or website
Registrar of births and deaths	0208 583 2090	registeroffice@hounslow.gov.uk
Cruse Bereavement Care	0808 808 1677	https://www.cruse.org.uk/

Age UK	0800 678 1602	https://www.ageuk.org.uk/contact-us/
The Compassionate Friends	0345 123 2304	https://www.tcf.org.uk/
The Bereavement Trust	0800 435 455	https://www.bereavement-trust.org.uk/
Lesbian and Gay Bereavement Project	020 7833 1675	office@londonfriend.org.uk
Child Bereavement UK	0800 02 888 40	https://www.childbereavementuk.org/
Grief Encounter Project	0808 802 0111	https://www.griefencounter.org.uk/
Child Death Helpline	0808 800 6019	http://childdeathhelpline.org.uk/
SANDS stillbirth and neonatal death society	0808 164 3332	https://www.sands.org.uk/
Epilepsy Bereaved	01235 772850	https://sudep.org/
SAMM – support after murder and manslaughter	0845 872 3440	https://www.samm.org.uk/
SOBS – survivors of bereavement by suicide	0300 111 5065	https://uksobs.org/
Citizen’s advice bureau	0300 330 1185	https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/
Moodjuice – booklet on bereavement		https://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/Bereavement.asp