



Death and Bereavement

Death and bereavement is something we will all face at some point during our lifetime. However in knowing this nothing prepares us for how we will feel or how we will respond or react. At times it can feel a very lonely experience as it can feel as though you are the only person who has felt this way. You are now alone.

Types of bereavement

A person can feel bereaved when anything or anyone who has been significant in their life ends or leaves them. This could include:

- Death of family, friends, colleagues or pets
- Retirement
- Moving house
- End of a relationship
- Child starting school/leaving home
- Leaving a job

Whilst everyone's bereavement experience is individual but there universal stages of grief it is hoped that by explaining the five general stages of normal grief this will help the bereaved person to better understand they experiences and emotions.

About the five stages of grieving

- Not everyone will experience them all
- Not everyone will experience them in the same order
- Each individual will spend a different length of time working through each step
- Each individual will experience each stage differently
- The five general stages do not necessarily occur in order. You may move back and forth between stages before achieving a more peaceful acceptance of death.
- The depth and intensity of the mourning process depends on many factors. The age of the person, or pet, the circumstances surrounding their death and relationship of the deceased and bereaved person are all significant.

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The Five Stages of Grieving

1. Denial, shock and Isolation

The first reaction to learning of terminal illness or death is to deny the reality of the situation. It is a normal reaction to rationalize overwhelming emotions. The reality of death has not yet been accepted by the bereaved. He or she feels stunned and bewildered as if everything is "unreal."

2. Anger

As the effects of denial and isolation begin to wear, reality and its pain re-emerge. The intense emotion is deflected from our vulnerable core, redirected and expressed instead as anger. You may feel guilty for being angry, and this makes you angrier. You may experience angry outbursts at family, friends, themselves, God or the world in general. You may experience feelings of guilt or fear during this stage.

3. Bargaining

The normal reaction to feelings of helplessness and vulnerability is often a need to regain control. Thoughts such as "what if" can also be common during this stage.

4. Depression

Depression occurs as a reaction to the changed way of life created by the loss. The bereaved person feels intensely sad, hopeless, drained and helpless. There are two types of depression associated with mourning.

- The first one is a reaction to practical implications relating to the loss. Sadness and regret predominate. We worry about the cost of treatment and burial. We worry that, in our grief, we have spent less time with others that depend on us. This phase may be eased by simple clarification and reassurance. We may need a bit of helpful cooperation and a few kind words.
- The second type of depression is more subtle and, in a sense, perhaps more private. It is our quiet preparation to separate and to bid our farewell. It is best to remember that a simple hug is a powerful thing and sometimes that is all that is needed to ease the moment.

5. Acceptance

Acceptance comes when the changes brought upon the person by the loss are stabilized into a new lifestyle. Death may be sudden and unexpected or we may never see beyond our anger or denial. This phase is marked by withdrawal and calm. This is not a period of happiness and must be distinguished from depression.

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What sort of help is available to me?

There is usually a range of options and many people find that it is helpful to use more than one.

Medical treatments - It may be helpful to see your GP who will discuss what could be appropriate for you this may be medication, or counselling or both.

Counselling - This can provide you with time and space away from normal day-to-day demands to explore what is going on for you and what could be the best way forward. This can also help you to understand your own grieving process and look at ways to help you to cope and manage.

Self-help - we often have much greater resources than we think we have and can do things to help ourselves. Eating a balanced diet, taking regular exercise, taking time out to relax, and talking to family and friends, reading a self-help book.

Useful organisations

[Age Concern England](#)

Tel: 0800 00 99 66

[Age Concern Scotland](#)

Tel: 0845 833 0200

[Age Concern Cymru](#)

Tel: 029 2037 1566

[Age Concern Northern Ireland](#)

Tel: 028 9024 5729

Age Concern is national network of groups providing services for older people. Some Age Concern groups offer bereavement counselling.

[Citizens Advice Bureau](#)

Look in your telephone book to find you're nearest Citizens Advice Bureau.

[The Compassionate Friends](#)

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The Compassionate Friends is a nationwide self-help organisation. Parents who have been bereaved themselves offer friendship and support to other bereaved parents, grandparents, and their families.

[Community Legal Service Direct](#)

Tel: 0845 345 4345

The Community Legal Service can give you advice on benefits, debt and legal aid.

[Cruse Bereavement Care](#)

Tel: 08444 779400

Cruse Bereavement Care offers free information, advice and support to bereaved people. Cruse runs a helpline, and can supply a wide range of books, leaflets and a newsletter for bereaved people.

[Facing Bereavement](#)

This website features articles and tips on how to deal with bereavement, from getting support and counselling to dealing with financial affairs or debts.

[Suggested reading](#)

What to do After a Death in England and Wales

A guide to what you must do and the help you can get available from the Benefits Agency Department of Social Security.

On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and David Kessler (2005)

I Wasn't Ready to Say Goodbye

Blake Noel (2008)

Cope with bereavement

By This Morning and Denise Robertson (2007)

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