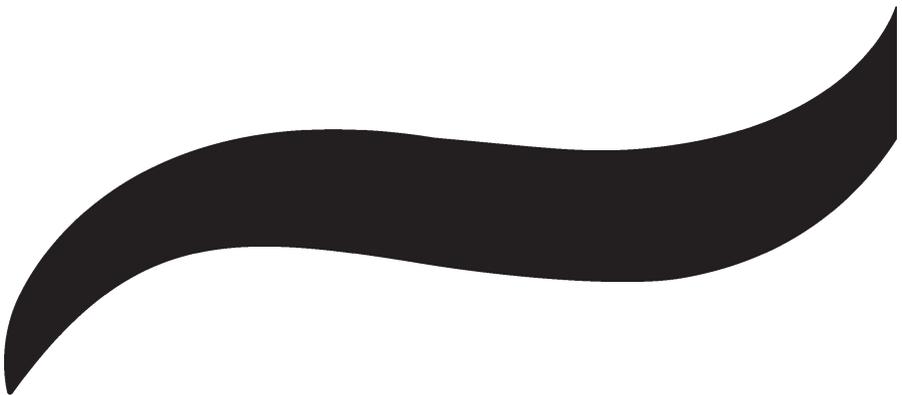


Coping with Bereavement

Information for clients



BEREAVEMENT – PEOPLE’S REACTIONS

“My sister died last year, and my brother died the year before. Now it’s only me left, and I feel so alone. I just want to talk to them sometimes...” *Isobel, 74*

“My mum died just before Christmas, after a long illness. She wanted to die, she was ready, but now I feel angry that somehow she gave up on life and I also regret that I didn’t manage to get her to keep going. Christmas is such a bad time... my dad died just before Christmas too.” *Jane, 43*

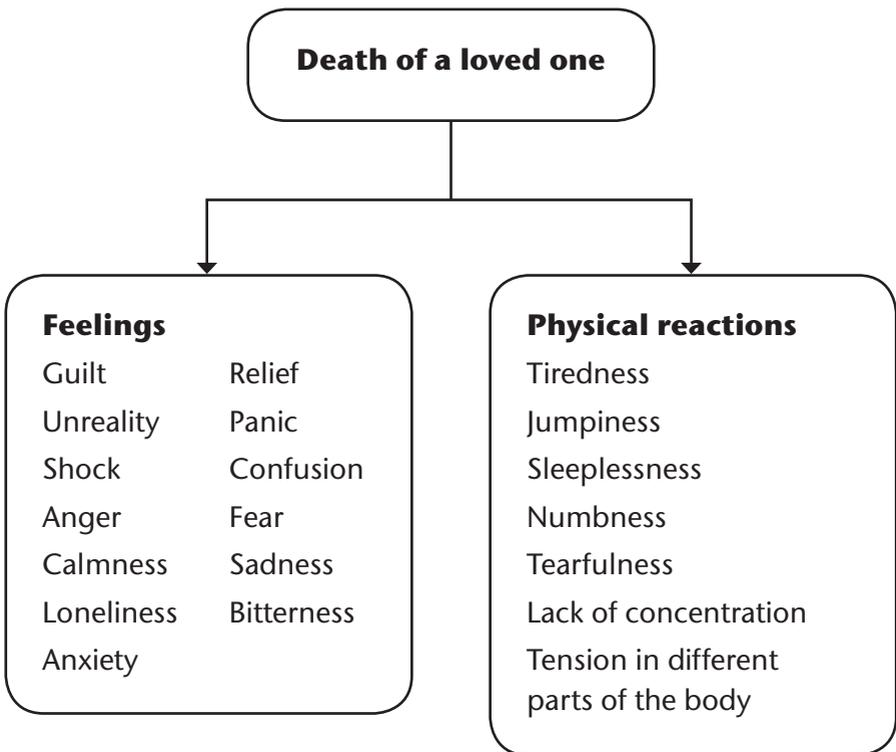
“Our son died. He was only a baby. Now my wife and I are both troubled by how it’s affected our other children, and yet we can’t talk about it. I think we both feel responsible but know we have to try and look forward and be strong for the children.” *Gordon, 35*

“When my wife died I thought I would never be able to carry on with everything; nobody seemed to understand. They said ‘you’re young, you’ll find someone else’ but I didn’t want to. I wanted her back so that she – we – could live the life we’d hoped for. It took me three years to come to terms with that loss and to be able to move forward – job, socialising, that sort of thing. I still feel that sense of loss, but it’s getting better.” *Hamish, 28*

“My twin died in a car crash, when I was abroad on holiday. I feel guilty that I wasn’t there with him. I feel as if part of me has died too. It’s hard...” *Sam, 18*

GRIEF

There is no one way to cope with the feelings any of us has after the death of someone close to us. We all feel differently and we all cope in different ways. You might feel quite isolated. You could possibly think nobody else has felt the same way as you do. These are some of the feelings or physical reactions you might be experiencing:



These feelings and physical reactions are very common. You may not experience some of them at all. Others may stay with you for a long time. You are likely to go through different emotions at different stages after the death of a loved one.

Sometimes, if a person is very ill for some time before they die, people can experience some of these emotions while the person is still alive. This is a normal reaction and is a sign of anticipating the loss.

At first you might:

- ❖ feel everything is unreal
- ❖ feel more alert than usual
- ❖ not be able to believe the person is dead
- ❖ worry about how life will be from now on
- ❖ not be able to sleep properly
- ❖ feel calm
- ❖ be forgetful
- ❖ need to cry
- ❖ need to shout
- ❖ not sleep well
- ❖ feel jumpy
- ❖ lose your appetite
- ❖ eat more than usual
- ❖ think you keep seeing the person who has died
- ❖ be anxious

Later, you might be:

- ❖ continually thinking about your loved one
- ❖ low in mood
- ❖ angry
- ❖ not wanting to socialise
- ❖ tired
- ❖ feeling a sense of loss
- ❖ relieved
- ❖ resenting other people who are getting on with their lives
- ❖ guilty
- ❖ panicky

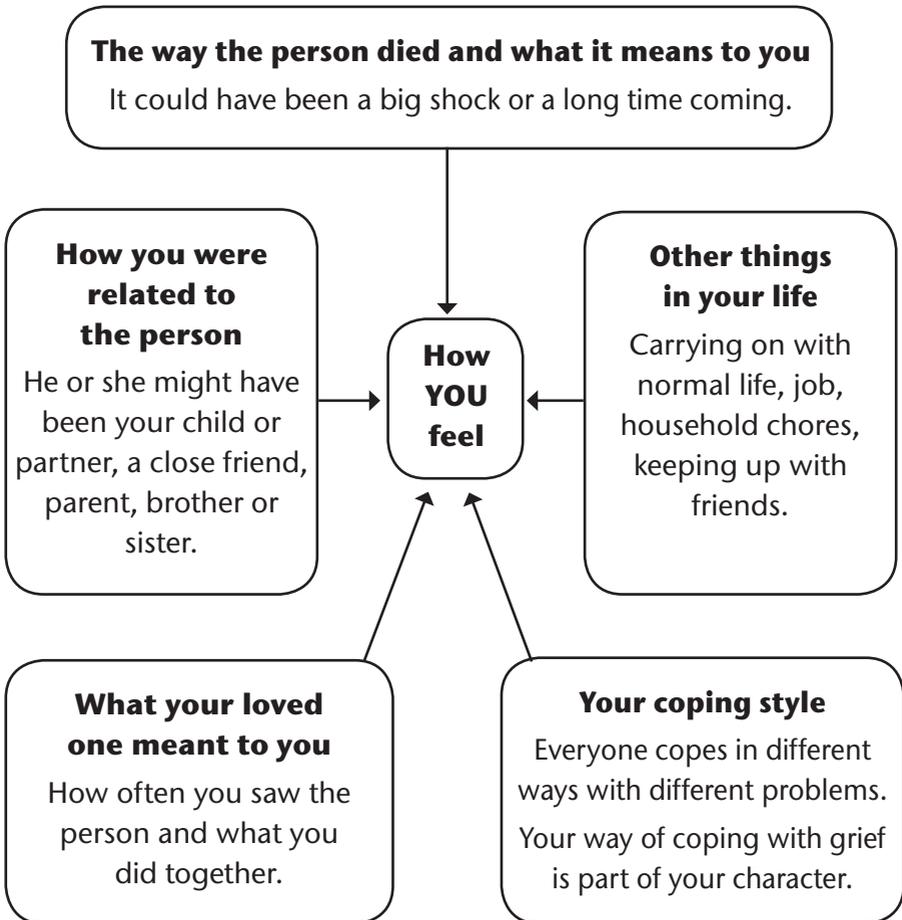
Everyone is different and feels differently about the loss of a loved one.

It is not the type of relationship – such as brother, wife or grandparent - but how you felt about the person that is most important.

What the loss means to you will affect you the most.

THE THINGS THAT AFFECT YOU

These are a few things that may influence how you feel after the death of a loved one:



HOW TO COPE

You might be overwhelmed by your first reactions to the death of a loved one. You might feel very little in the beginning.

Some people find that these feelings are with them for months or years. In some ways there will be a permanent change in how a person feels following a significant loss. However, over time there will usually be a decrease in the way the feelings affect day-to-day life.

Everyone takes his or her own time to learn to cope. The important thing is for you to accept that whatever you feel is not unusual, and to allow yourself to feel as you do and not worry about this.

Over time you are likely to find yourself thinking less about your loved one and more about your own life. You might feel guilty or disloyal about this, but you can allow yourself to return to the normal aspects of your life. You can allow yourself to enjoy the things you like to do. Some people set aside a special time to think about the person, perhaps visit a certain place where they can think about them without other distractions.

WHAT TO DO

Remember that everyone has different needs at times of bereavement. What is right for one person might not be right for another.

It is better to avoid big changes in the months following a death. Things such as moving house or changing job are difficult to cope with at the best of times, so unless absolutely necessary it is best not to put yourself through such changes.

There is the question of your loved one's possessions and clothing. Dealing with these is one of the hardest parts of the grieving process. It takes a lot of courage to do it, but it can help you to come to terms with your loss. It may help to have someone to help – the time to do it is when you feel you can.

Try to keep healthy. Eat well and give yourself time to rest and exercise. Try to keep in touch with your friends and family so that you are not on your own when you don't want to be. It is tempting to resort to alcohol, but this is not a useful answer. It is likely to make you more depressed and less able to cope.

If you can, try to talk to someone about how you are feeling. Sharing your thoughts and feelings can be helpful in coping with your loss.

Others in your family or circle of friends might be finding it difficult to cope. Talking with them might help both you and them. Try not to avoid talking about your loved one. It can be helpful to ask a close friend to let others know how you would like to be approached. For example, the friend could tell people that you don't mind if they don't say anything about your loss when with you.

If you are worried about how you feel, or after some weeks you appear to be feeling worse, it might be worth speaking to your GP.

CHILDREN

If children are affected by the death, that should be acknowledged. Even very young children experience grief, and they need to be given the chance to talk about it. They might not yet have the words to express themselves or the ability to think things through.

There are some useful publications available for those supporting bereaved children (see page 10).

KEY POINTS:

- ❖ Loss affects everyone differently
- ❖ People cope with grief and loss in their own unique way
- ❖ There is no correct way to act or feel when you experience loss – you feel the way you feel

FURTHER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT:

Useful Contacts

For information on mental services, supports, opportunities or self-help information call:

- ❖ North Lanarkshire: Well Informed 0800 073 0918
- ❖ South Lanarkshire: Lanarkshire Association for Mental Health Information Line: 0330 3000 133

For further information on mental health and well-being, visit Lanarkshire's Elament website: www.elament.org.uk

Remember, should your problems persist or you feel you need help urgently please contact your GP. The following organisations can also prove useful in and out of hours.

- ❖ **Breathing Space** - 0800 83 85 87
(Mon - Thu, 6pm - 2am; Fri 6pm - Mon 6am)
www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk
- ❖ **Samaritans** - 116 123 (24hrs) www.samaritans.org
- ❖ **NHS24** - 111 (Out of hours) www.nhs24.com
- ❖ **Healthy Working Lives** - 08452 300 323 (Local),
0800 019 2211 (National),
www.healthyworkinglives.com
- ❖ **Childline** - 0800 11 11 (24hrs) www.childline.org.uk
- ❖ **NHS Inform** - 0800 22 44 88 www.nhsinform.co.uk
- ❖ **Parentline Scotland** - 0808 800 22 22
www.children1st.org.uk/parentline
- ❖ **National Debt Line Scotland** - 0808 808 4000
www.nationaldebtline.co.uk/scotland
- ❖ **National Domestic Abuse Helpline** - 0800 027 1234

WHAT IS WELL CONNECTED?

Well Connected is a new programme in Lanarkshire, sometimes referred to as social prescribing or community referral. It makes it easier for us and people we know to take part in and benefit from activities and services that we know improve our well-being which means how we feel about ourselves and our lives. There are a number of Well Connected areas available to us and we can benefit from more than one:

- ❖ Physical activity and leisure opportunities
- ❖ Volunteering
- ❖ Employment
- ❖ Arts and culture
- ❖ Benefits, welfare and debt advice
- ❖ Learning opportunities
- ❖ Stress Control Classes in communities
- ❖ Health Walks
- ❖ Mindfulness Classes.

For information on any of the above call:

- ❖ North Lanarkshire: Well Informed 0800 073 0918
- ❖ South Lanarkshire: Lanarkshire Association for Mental Health Information Line: 0330 3000 133
- ❖ Visit: www.elament.org.uk/self-help-resources/well-connected-programme.aspx

HEALTHY READING

All public libraries have a healthy reading section making it easier to access mental health and well-being leaflets, books, CDs, DVDs and web-based support. All libraries across Lanarkshire have resources to help us get the most from life such as living life to the full, sleeping better and becoming more confident or overcoming and coping with mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, stress, dementia and panic. There are also resources for all ages including supporting young people, adults and older people as well as items on positive parenting. Simply pop into your local library.

GUIDED SUPPORT:

Stress Control Classes

Stress Control classes will help develop skills and techniques to manage common issues caused by modern day living such as stress, anxiety or low confidence.

The classes are delivered in local community facilities and consist of six sessions lasting 90 minutes each. We will not need to speak about our issues during the class. Just sit back and listen about helpful stress control techniques. Feel free to bring someone along with you for support. To find your nearest class and book a place, call **0300 303 0447**.

Living Life to the Full - Online Course

Living Life to The Full is a free web-based life skills course that aims to help us tackle and respond to issues/demands which we all meet in our everyday lives. It will explore issues such as understanding why we feel the way we do, problem solving, noticing and challenging unhelpful thoughts and behaviours and anxiety control. You can register for the course at **www.lltff.com** and complete as many or as few modules as you wish.

If you feel you need additional help, the Living Life to The Full course is also available with support from self help coaches (via Action on Depression Scotland). To find out more visit **www.aod.lltffionline.co.uk**

Living Life: Guided Self Help and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy - Telephone Support

Living Life is a free telephone support service for people suffering from low mood, mild to moderate depression, symptoms of anxiety or a combination of both. Trained Self-help coaches and therapists will guide us through a range of workbooks over a series of telephone sessions. For more information or to make a telephone appointment, call **0800 328 9655** (Mon–Fri 1–9pm).



www.patientopinion.org.uk

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