

Bereavement Support Helping You to Cope

Mortuary & Bereavement Services



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Introduction

This booklet has been written to help when you have been affected by a loss or bereavement in the immediate aftermath of the death of a relative or friend.

By their very nature, these events can be distressing. The emotional and physical reactions that follow bereavement can be intense and you may be surprised by the reactions that follow. These can be unfamiliar and out of character.

This booklet offers advice which may help you understand and cope with your reactions.

Feelings following bereavement

There are no right or wrong ways to grieve. We all need to grieve in our own way and in our own time. There is no set timescale for the grief process as every one of us is a unique individual. Reactions and feelings can change from hour to hour or day to day and normal daily events such as a specific smell or song can trigger a grief response. Some of the most common feelings are:

- **Shock and disbelief**

It can take quite some time for the bad news to sink in. You can't believe it, not at first, it's like dream, it's not real.

- **Loss**

You've lost so much - the person, their love, their friendship, their companionship, hopes, and this can produce a deep sense of sadness.

- **Guilt and regret**

You may regret not saying or doing something you feel should have been said or done. You can be regretful for feeling angry. Some will feel 'survivor guilt' - being alive when another is dead. If the death was unexpected or sudden, feelings of regret and guilt could probably be heightened. You might also feel shame or blame yourself.

- **Injustice**

Why did s/he have to die? Why did this have to happen to me? It's not fair.

- **Envy**

You might envy others for having what you don't have - the partner, parent, child, friend, you have just lost. You could also envy others for their apparent carefree lives.

- **Anger**

You might feel angry with the world or with people for: causing the death, not being able to cure the illness, not understanding your feelings, making thoughtless remarks or carrying on with life and having fun.

You might feel angry with yourself too, for what you did or did not do. But perhaps most difficult of all, you might feel angry with the dead person for dying and abandoning you and for the pain you are suffering as a result of their death.

- **Loneliness**

Grieving can be a lonely process. You may feel that no-one can possibly understand what you are going through or that no-one cares.

- **Depression**

Feeling low is a natural part of the mourning process. For a time, you could lose interest in life and feel that there's no point in going on. At worst you might feel despair.

- **Relief**

You might feel relieved, especially if the death followed a long illness or if the person's quality of life had deteriorated.

Physical effects following a bereavement

Grief also affects our behaviour and functioning. You may find it affects you in some or all the following ways:

- **Sleep disruption**

You may find that you can't get to sleep or can't stay asleep or that you wake early.

- **Loss of appetite**

You might not feel like eating, or you may feel sick when you do.

- **Exhaustion**

Grief is stressful, and if you are also not sleeping or eating well, you are bound to feel tired and worn down.

- **Restlessness**

You may find it hard to concentrate or relax and 'switch off'. Your mind can go into overdrive trying to make sense of what has happened.

- **Anxiety and panic**

With so many powerful and unfamiliar feelings aroused, you might become anxious and panicky. These can lead to such bodily responses as, palpitations of the heart, excessive sweating, nausea, and digestive problems.

- **Inability to cope**

You might find it difficult to cope with ordinary, everyday things like shopping, cooking, study, or work.

- **Loss of interest**

Things that were once a source of pleasure to you now feel meaningless and tiresome.

- **Irritability**

You might find yourself 'snapping' even if you are not the sort of person who normally reacts in this way.

- **Tearfulness**

You might cry a lot; in fact, sometimes it's all you can do. Crying can help.

Helping yourself

- Reducing the impact of grief by acknowledging that it is normal to feel 'not normal'.
- Ensuring that you are clear with what did happen, rather than relying on what you believe to have happened, can help.

Talking about your grief to friends or family members can help, sometimes it's not always easy to talk to those closest to you, for fear of expressing your emotions, upsetting them or even being a burden to them.

The bereavement Liaison specialist nurse is also available to contact, to offer further ongoing help /Support /information.

Telephone: **01942 773548** (messaging service available out of hours).

In addition to Patient Relations/PALS Service you can contact **CARE LINE:**
Tel: 01942 773377 (Monday to Friday 9am to 9pm and weekends 9am to 5pm
– excluding bank holidays).

Please use this space to write notes or reminders.

Comments, Compliments or Complaints

The Patient Relations/Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) Department provides confidential on the spot advice, information and support to patients, relatives, friends, and carers.

Contact Us

Tel: 01942 822376 (Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm)

The Patient Relations/PALS Manager
Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Royal Albert Edward Infirmary
Wigan Lane
Wigan WN1 2NN

Ask 3 Questions

Become more involved in decisions about your healthcare. You may be asked to make choices about your treatment. To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions:

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?



How We Use Your Information

For details on how we collect, use, and store the information we hold about you, please see patient information leaflet, Ref. **Corp 006** How we use your information, this can be found on the Patient Information Leaflets page on the Trust website, see details on the front cover.

This leaflet is also available in audio, large print, Braille, and other languages upon request. For more information, please ask in the department/ward.

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