Books on grief and bereavement
A guide for carers and families
Books on grief and bereavement
A collection of books that may be helpful

When a friend or family member dies, you may not feel ready to talk to anyone about what you’re feeling. Reading about death and grief, whether real or fictional, can help people make better sense of grief and bereavement. The following leaflet provides a collection of books that may be helpful.

We have divided the books into the following sections:

- Grief and bereavement
- Losing a partner
- Widowed young
- Losing a same-sex partner
- Losing a parent
- Losing a sibling
- Losing a child
- Young adults and teenagers
- Bereavement poems – anthologies

Visit www.amazon.co.uk to find more information on the books suggested over the following pages. You can often get cheaper prices by selecting Amazon’s “Used” option and looking through the second-hand books. ‘The publisher and year of publication are provided in brackets where available’.

If you can suggest other helpful books that are not currently on the list, please do email the details to the Hospice Librarian at celladicicco@pah.co.uk or call 01372 461843.

Grief and bereavement

Healing Grief
A positive, self-help approach to loss, grieving and bereavement by Barbara Ward.
(Vermillion, 1993).

The Courage to Grieve
Experienced therapist Judy Tatelbaum writes simply and with understanding about many aspects of grief, including complex situations such as delayed grieving.
(Cedar Books, 1993).

The Early Days of Grieving
Derek Nuttall speaks simply and directly to bereaved people, offering support, explanation and information.
(Darton, Longman & Todd, 2006).

The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying
A classic of wisdom and enlightenment from a buddhist tradition, by a Tibetan writer and teacher who also understands the West.
(Rider, 2008).

Through Grief
A popular book by Elizabeth Collick about the pattern of grief and recovery. Helpful for those experiencing deep grief.
(Darton, Longman & Todd, 1986).

You’ll Get Over It: The Rage of Bereavement
The well-known journalist and agony aunt Virginia Ironside writes about her own and others’ experience of bereavement.
(Penguin, 1997).

When Bad Things Happen to Good People
A wise book on suffering written by Rabbi Harold Kushner.
(Pan, 2002).

Death is Nothing at all: ‘...I have only slipped away into the next room...’
The well-known words of comfort by Canon Henry Scott Holland presented as a small, illustrated book.
(Souvenir Press, 1987).

The Grief Book
by Debbie Moore and Caroline Cowperthwaite, is a workbook aimed at helping you work through your own grief process.
(CreateSpace, 2012).
A Grief Observed by C.S. Lewis is a very personal and clearly written account of the author’s loss following the death of his wife. You may find this book particularly helpful if you have spiritual beliefs. (Faber & Faber, 2013).

Dying to Know by Andrew Anastasios provides illustrated ideas and advice for those who’ve lost a friend or family member. The book was written after many conversations with doctors, people with life-limiting illness, the funeral industry and religious leaders. (Hardie Grant Books, 2010).

Bereavement: Studies of Grief in Adult Life by Collin Murray Parkes, was written for professionals as well as people who’ve recently lost a friend or family member. (Penguin, 2010, 4th edition).

A Grief Workbook for Skeptics: Surviving Loss Without Religion by Carol Fiore, charts a way through grief for those without religion. (Flying Kea Press, 2014).


I Wasn’t Ready to Say Goodbye: Surviving, Coping & Healing after the Sudden Death of a Loved One by Brook Noel and Pamela D Blair. The authors have been there themselves and offer practical exercises for working through the mourning process. Especially helpful for those during the first weeks after a sudden tragic loss. (Sourcebooks, 2008).

Living When a Loved One Has Died by Earl Grollman is a gentle, poetic journey through grief. Recommended for the later stages of grief, not the first few weeks. (Souvenir Press, 2014).

To Begin Again by Rabbi Naomi Levy. A compassionate understanding of grief that is useful for those of any spiritual belief. Levy realises that the question after a personal tragedy should not be, “Why did this happen?” but rather, “How can I go on?”. (Thorsons, 1999).

How to go on Living When Someone You Love Dies by Therese Rando. This easy and practical read helps you understand the grieving process and find comfort from learning you are “normal” in your grief. This self-help book provides specific coping strategies for different situations. (Bantam Doubleday Dell, 1991).


Living on the Seabed: A Memoir of Love, Life and Survival by Lindsay Nicholson, is a brutally honest reflection of one woman’s grief and the struggle to come to terms with the loss of her husband and daughter. (Vermilion, 2006).

We Need to Talk about Grief by Annie Broadbent describes grief as an unavoidable part of life and that we will all be called upon at some point to help a friend or loved one cope with the death of someone they love. This book will help you do that. (Piatkus, 2014).

Just Me by Sheila Hancock is a book about moving on, but it is also about looking back, and looking anew; A reflection on the new life the author established, following the death of her husband, John Thaw. (Bloomsbury, 2009).
Relative Grief by Clare Jenkins, Judy Merry and Dorothy Rowe, is a compilation of short reflections by many people on the death of someone close to them. They are themed by the relationship the writer had with the deceased – mothers, fathers, daughters, sons, sisters, brothers, wives, husbands, partners, grandparents, grandchildren and friends. (Jessica Kingsley, 2005).

Grappling with Grief by Penny Rawson is written to assist any adult dealing with great loss, especially the death of someone close to them. It is based on the author’s personal experience as well as on her work as a psychotherapist. (Karnac Books, 2004).

All in the End is Harvest by Agnes Whitaker, pulls on the expertise of the whole Cruse Bereavement Care organisation to provide extracts of prose and poetry known to have been of help to bereaved people. (Darton,Longman & Todd, 1984).

Losing a partner

Coping with your Partner’s Death: Your Bereavement by Geoff Billings, is a broadly practical approach to being bereaved of a partner. (Sheldon Press, 2008).

Diary of a Grief

Peter Woods’ wife died after 53 years of marriage and his diary over the next three years traces his experience of grieving. It was a journey which often felt like taking one step forward and two steps backwards, but one in which he gradually moves forward. (William Sessions, 1998).

A Grief Observed by C.S. Lewis, is a very personal and clearly written account of the author’s loss following the death of his wife. You may find this book particularly helpful if you have spiritual beliefs. (Faber & Faber, 2013).

Why Not Me? A Story of Love and Loss by Barbara Want, is a memoir of grief recounting the death from cancer of Nick Clarke, much-loved BBC radio presenter, from his widow Barbara’s point of view. (W&N, 2011).

The Empty Bed: Bereavement and the Loss of love by Susan Wallbank, looks at the loss of a sexual partner, at whatever age this may happen, and includes open discussion of the effects of loss of physical intimacy. (Darton, Longman & Todd, 2010).

The Presence

Several months after the death of poet Dannie Abse’s wife in a car accident, he began to write a diary which is both a record of present grief and a portrait of a marriage that lasted more than fifty years. (Vintage, 2008).

The Year of Magical Thinking by Joan Didion – One night, the author and her husband were just sitting down to dinner when John suffered a massive and fatal coronary heart attack. In a second, a partnership of 40 years was over, as was “any fixed idea I ever had about death, about illness … about marriage and children and memory”. (Harper Perennial, 2006).

A Widow’s Story describes Joyce Carol Oates’ struggle to comprehend a life absent of the partnership that had sustained and defined her for nearly half a century. (Fourth Estate, 2012).

After You by Maryalicia Post, is a diary of the first year after the author lost her husband. (Souvenir Press, 2007).

Widowed young

Death and How to Survive It by Kate Boydell. Kate Boydell was widowed at the age of 33. In this practical and often humorous guide, the author draws on her own experience of bereavement to offer frank advice on coping with every aspect of the grieving process. (Vermilion, 2005).

Living With Loss by Liz Taylor. Liz McNeil Taylor discusses, with painful honesty, the problems surrounding a suddenly bereaved woman and her strong conflicting reactions to the tragedy. (Right Way, 2009).
Losing a same-sex partner

Gay Widowers: Life After the Death of a Partner by Michael Shernof. Men of different ages and ethnic, religious, geographic, and economic backgrounds join together in this book to remind other gay widowers that they are not alone and that their feelings of pain, anger, and emptiness are normal and legitimate. (Routledge, 1997).

Lesbian Widows: Invisible Grief by Victoria Whipple. reveals the touching and very personal stories of 25 women, including the author, who were widowed at a young age and forced to create a new life without their life partners. (Routledge, 2006).


The Loss of a Life Partner: Narratives of the Bereaved by Carolyn Ambler Walter. This text integrates the literature about and the bereavement experiences of partners in varying types of relationships, including gay men and lesbians. (Columbia University Press, 2003).

Losing a parent

Motherless Daughters: The Legacy of Loss by Hope Edelman. Although a mother’s mortality is inevitable, no book had discussed the profound, lasting, and far-reaching effects of this loss until “Motherless Daughters,” which became an instant classic. (Da Capo Lifelong Books, 2014).

When Parents Die by Rebecca Abrams, is written for young people grieving for a parent. The author was a Cambridge student whose father died when she was 18 and she offers support based on her personal experience and that of other bereaved young people. (Routledge, 2012).

Final Reminder: How I Emptied My Parents’ House by Lydia Flem. Described as “taboo-breaking”, the author covers, from personal experience, the range of emotions experienced in bereavement. (Souvenir Press, 2006).

Losing a sibling

Surviving the Death of a Sibling: Living Through Grief When an Adult Brother or Sister Dies by TJ Wray. Based on the author’s own experiences as well as those of people she has contacted through her website (AdultSiblingGrief.com), “Surviving the Death of a Sibling” shows adults who have lost a sibling that they are not alone in their struggle. (Three Rivers Press (CA), 2003).

Sibling Bereavement: Helping Children Cope with Loss by Ann Farrant. Written from personal experience, the book also has case histories and commentaries intended to help parents understand their own and their children’s reactions. Potentially also useful for adults still grieving the death of a sibling in childhood. (Continuum International Publishing, 1998).
The Worst Loss by Barbara Rosof. The death of a child is a loss like no other. The book tries to answer key questions: How do families survive this worst loss? What helps people heal? What have families and clinicians learned that will help others through their loss and enable them to rebuild their lives? (Owl Books (NY), 1995).

Facing Grief: Bereavement and the Young Adult by Susan Wallbank. A guide intended for young adults (18–28) which discusses the effects of bereavement and coping with emotions caused by the loss of a loved one. Also offers advice on how to handle practical matters from funeral arrangements to the legal complexities of a will. (Lutterworth Press, 1991).

Always With You by Gloria Hunniford. On 13 April 2004, Gloria Hunniford’s 41 year old daughter, Caron Keating, died after a secret seven year battle with cancer. It is a story of how Gloria and her family survived Caron’s death. (Hodder & Stoughton, 2009).


The Bereaved Parent by HS Schiff. Is a book providing practical advice to those who have lost a child. Schiff, who lost a child herself, treads sensitively and compassionately through the painful process of bereavement and grief (Souvenir Press, 1979).


Give sorrow words: anthologies

The Book of Love and Loss edited by June Hall and RV Bailey. A collection of nearly 400 poems from 197 contemporary poets offering a fresh approach to this universal theme. All profits from the book will be donated to research into Parkinson’s Disease. (Belgrave Press, 2014).

Poems and Readings for Funerals is a collection of 70 poems and prose extracts suitable for reading at funerals and celebrations of a life. (Penguin, 2004).

Our support

When a loved one is dying it is likely to be a very difficult time. It can be hard to know what to do, what to say and how to cope.

Remember that we are always here to help and support you. Please do come and talk to us about how you are feeling and any concerns you may have.

Contact us
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West End Lane, Esher
Surrey KT10 8NA

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