



Princess Alice
Hospice

Bereavement and support

A guide for carers and families



Bereavement and support

A guide for carers and families

Most of us, at some time in our lives, will be faced with the death of someone we care deeply about. Although each of us reacts in different ways to loss, we have tried to describe some of the feelings and experiences most frequently felt by people who have been bereaved. If you recognise any of these feelings in yourself, we hope you will take comfort from knowing that others share them.

Mourning is the process of adapting to loss. We must grieve for those who have died so that we can go on living.

Assimilating the reality of loss

At first you may feel numb, strangely calm and detached, or confused and unable to take in what has happened. For a while it may seem impossible to believe that someone has died. It is quite common to think you can hear or see the person who has died. You may look for them in a crowd, listen for them when the phone rings, or see them in a favourite chair—even though you know they will not be there. At times you may have the feeling that you are searching for something but are never able to find it.

Disorganisation, emptiness, despair

This period may be the longest part of grieving. You may feel that you no longer have a reason for living, that nothing interests you; you may even feel that you are 'going mad'. Perhaps you will feel guilty for the things you did or did not do. Many bereaved people find themselves feeling angry with God, family, friends, the hospital and medical staff, themselves, or with the one who has died. It is not unusual to have difficulty in remembering simple things or doing your normal tasks. Feelings of anxiety, helplessness, fear and tremendous loneliness are felt by many people during this stage. You may well think you will never feel better again.

Health

It is quite normal to feel tired and to be unable to sleep, eat or concentrate properly. You may begin to have pains you normally do not have. For the most part these are things that happen to many bereaved people but if they persist you should see a doctor.

Wanting to escape

You may feel that you could cope better if you moved house and disposed of the things that are reminders of the dead person. Bereavement IS painful. It is much better to make important decisions like moving house, when you are able to think more clearly and objectively. Try to avoid making decisions you might regret until you feel better.

Beginning to live again

In time you will become aware that you are beginning to have good hours and days. You will find that you can listen to that 'special' piece of music or remember something that you once shared with the one who has died without feeling sad. Gradually you will begin to take up new interests and renew some of your old ones. You may sometimes feel that you are being disloyal to the person who has died but you should try to remember that, whilst the past will always be with you, there is a present and future you can enjoy.

Helping yourself

Grief is individual and each of us reacts to it differently. No one can completely understand what another person's grief is like but it is an experience most of us go through and there are people willing to listen and understand as much as they can. If you have feelings of guilt, panic, anger, fear or self pity, don't try to hide them; they are part of your grief. Try to share them with an understanding listener.

If friends seem to be avoiding you it is possible they are embarrassed because they feel helpless to say or do the 'right' thing. They too may be grieving. Allow yourself to express your feelings—good and not so good—with someone you trust. Talk about the person you loved—especially with other people who knew them. Allow yourself to cry, to laugh, to be angry. You have lost someone you feel deeply about and it hurts—allow yourself to experience the pain so that you may work through it.

“ Grief is the price we pay for love,
it is the cost of commitment. ”

Collin Murray Parkes

Our support

If you would like the chance to talk about your experiences with others who may be in a similar situation you may wish to come to one of our groups.

Open Group for Adults - 2nd Monday of each month, 11am to 12.30pm, refreshments provided.

Dovetail Group for Parents, Teenagers and Children - 2nd Tuesday of each month, 4.30pm to 6pm, light refreshments and activities provided.

Monthly Remembrance Service - 1st Wednesday of each month at 3pm, refreshments provided.

Walk and Talk - A chance to meet and share experiences with others who are bereaved. First Thursday of the month in Bushy Park 10.45am (Pheasantry Café car park). Second Wednesday of the month in Richmond Park 10.45am (Pembroke Lodge car park).

Light Up a Life Service of Remembrance - Our annual event is an important moment of commemoration for those who have been recently bereaved to share experiences, sing carols and witness our Tree of Light being switched on. First Sunday every December.

If you would prefer one-to-one support we can arrange for you to see one of our trained Bereavement Support Volunteers.

Contact us

Princess Alice Hospice, West End Lane, Esher, Surrey KT10 8NA

Bereavement Support Co-ordinator

01372 461842

If you would prefer not to contact the Hospice, Cruse Bereavement Care, an organisation for bereaved people, can offer advice.

Cruse Bereavement Care 0844 477 9400

www.cruse.org.uk

Join us at pahospice

