

UNDERSTANDING GRIEF AND BEREAVEMENT



What is grief?

It can be extremely difficult when you lose someone you knew. Whether you've lost a family member, a friend or a pet, you may feel a whole range of emotions. Grief is an emotional response to this loss, and is a process rather than an event. It may affect how you feel physically, mentally and socially.

You might be grieving because of:

- The death of a family member, like a parent, grandparent or sibling
- The death of a friend, or someone you knew at school
- The death of someone by suicide
- A change in a relationship
- An illness of someone close to you, like cancer or dementia
- The loss of a relationship, like someone moving away or no longer being in your life regularly
- The loss or death of a pet animal

Whoever you have lost, you need time and space to grieve and come to terms with their death.

There's no right or wrong way to grieve. You might feel angry, sad or depressed, or even guilt or relief. You might be numb and not feel anything. The way you grieve might be influenced by your culture, beliefs, or how your family and community understand loss. How you react might be different to how other people around you react. You might not feel anything for a while, and may experience delayed grief. There might be some occasions when you are expecting it, like when you experience one of many 'firsts', such as your first Christmas without that person. Or these feelings might catch you unaware sometimes. Grief can come up at any time.

You might feel:

- Shock
- Panic
- Sadness or depression
- Anger
- Fearful or anxious
- Guilt
- Relief
- Numbness, or nothing
- Concerned with your health or other people's
- Abandoned
- Acceptance



However you're feeling, your feelings are valid and you are not alone.

Working through your grief

It takes time to work through grief and it's best not to do it alone. Sometimes you might be surprised by feelings of sadness when you don't expect them – or you might keep worrying about other people's health, or your own. These feelings are all normal. Most of us get through with the support of family and friends.

If you're struggling to come to terms with a death, finding daily life hard and things don't seem to be getting any better, it can help to talk to someone. Tell a trusted friend, family member or another trusted adult in your life e.g. teacher, youth worker etc. If you're feeling very worried, you can talk to your GP or school nurse about counselling and professional support.

It's can be normal to feel guilty. But remember, the loss you have experienced is not your fault. And if you stop feeling sad or in pain, it does not mean that you don't care enough. You are allowed to move on in your life, and it is not a sign that you don't care enough for the person you have lost.

Helpful ways you can communicate how you are feeling:

- Write a letter to the person you have lost telling them all the things you want to say to them
- Write a letter to someone who is supporting you, so they know what you are going through
- Keep a diary or journal of how you feel
- Express yourself through paintings or pictures
- Write a song or poem
- Create a memory box full of pictures and items which remind you of good times you had with the person you have lost



How to help a friend who has been bereaved

Listen if they want to talk. Don't feel you've got to solve anything or say something. You might feel helpless, but just being there and listening can be really helpful.

Share your memories. If it feels appropriate and you're able to, share your memories of the person who's gone, during a chat, or in a card or letter. For the bereaved person, this can feel like being given back little pieces of the person they've lost.

Don't feel rejected if they don't want you there. They might prefer to have one friend for going out, another to study with and so on. Make allowances for what works for them.

There are many support services available to help with bereavement and a full list can be found on www.howareyoufeeling.org.uk

SOURCE: Young Minds