

27. SOMEONE TO TALK TO - BEREAVEMENT

There are many different sources of help available to someone who is bereaved and the most suitable type of help will depend very much on the individual.

However prepared one might be for the death of a loved one, the sheer intensity of the emotions and reactions to the death can be overwhelming. It can be confusing to feel angry and unable to concentrate - though these are very common manifestations of bereavement - and the act of talking to someone about one's feelings, whether it is to friends or trained counsellors, can be of great comfort and assistance in this process. The most obvious forms of help come from friends and family, but assistance is also available via the GP, clergy and from professional and voluntary bereavement counsellors. Often families and friends experience discomfort at talking about the deceased and fear the effect that talking about them will have on the bereaved person, when often this is just what they want. A counsellor can facilitate discussion and open the way for the bereaved to verbalise the numerous and conflicting emotions brought about by their loss.



Much has been written about the 'stages of grief', but these stages should be seen as a broad guide only. They can be affected by such things as the manner of death and the ages of the deceased and the survivor.

Loneliness and problems associated with the tasks of daily living are common and difficult adjustments for the bereaved. The extent of their dependence on the deceased can also affect the severity of the bereavement as can the nature of the death. Above all, there is no timetable for grieving; each person has to do it at their own pace.

Anyone supporting someone who is recently bereaved needs to be aware that death often engenders ambivalent feelings. Disbelief is often a feature and the ramifications of loss can take a long time to filter through.

Common features of bereavement also include: denial; struggling to adapt to the new reality; shock; anger with the person who has died; self-reproach; going over and over events leading to the illness and the death; being weighed down with guilt or being overwrought by the feeling of unfinished business or things unsaid. It is not uncommon for the bereaved to isolate themselves, and friends and relatives may therefore need to gently but assertively reach out to the bereaved.

In coping with bereavement some people find it a help to write down their feelings, others do something directly related to the cause of death, say, joining an action group or charity and others just need to be able to talk when they need to.

Child Death Helpline

A confidential Helpline for bereaved parents/carers who, following the death of a child, wish to talk to someone in a similar situation

Tel: 0800 282986 (Evenings 7-10pm, Mon-Fri 10am-1pm, and Wed 1-4pm)

Church Support

All ministers who conduct funeral services would be willing to be approached regarding advice and support. Telephone your local church to find out what bereavement support is offered through the church.

Compassionate Friends

Support and friendship for bereaved parents and their families by those similarly bereaved. Produce information leaflets, newsletters and provide one to one support as well as having a number of local support groups. National Helpline open 365 days a year (10am-4pm and 6.30pm-10.30pm). Tel: 0845 123 2304

Cruse

A national organisation with branches throughout the UK. Aims to provide individual and group counselling as well as social support to all who seek its help as well as producing a wide range of literature on the subject. The local branch can offer free confidential listening and support to people in their own homes, covering the Chichester District, Bognor Regis and Arundel Tel: 01243 530202. National Helpline: 0844 4779400 email: helpline@cruse.org.uk. There is also a free Helpline for young people aged 12-18 years affected by someone's death Tel: 0808 808 1677 Website: www.cruse.org.uk

Lesbian and Gay Bereavement Project

Offer support to lesbians and gay men who have been bereaved. Face to face counselling in London only. Also information including advice on Wills. Tel: 020 7403 5969

National Association of Widows

Head Office provides advice and information to all widows, their families and friends as well as details of local branches offering support, social activities and friendship. The service is free and confidential. 48 Queens Road, Coventry, CV1 3EH. Tel: 0845 8382261

Samaritans often receive calls from people who are bereaved and provide the opportunity to talk in confidence to someone who is independent. Tel: 08457 909090 24hrs

The WAY Foundation

A UK-wide self-help and social support network for men and women widowed under the age of 50 and their children. There is an annual membership fee of £10. Members receive a quarterly newsletter, access to the lending library of videos and books, contact lists of local members and access to the members-only email notice boards where they can share their thoughts and feelings at any time. Tel: 0870 011 3450 Website: www.wayfoundation.org.uk

Winston's Wish

A national Helpline for anyone concerned about a child who has been bereaved. Have a range of literature and support services to assist children to cope with a close family death. Contact: Winston's Wish, Clara Burgess Centre, Bayshill Road, Cheltenham, GL50 3AW Tel: 0845 2030 405 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm) Website: www.winstonswish.org.uk