

sleep improves and energy returns to normal.

As we said at the beginning there is no standard way of grieving - the various stages of mourning set out above often overlap and show themselves in different ways in different people.

Most recover from major bereavement within one or two years.

When to seek help

Bereavement turns our world upside-down and is one of the most painful experiences we endure. It can be strange, terrible and overwhelming but it is a part of life that we all go through and usually does not require medical attention.

Sometimes however people do need some medical help to get through a loss and below are some suggestions which may help if this happens.

Occasionally, sleepless nights may go on for as long as to become a serious problem. The doctor may then prescribe you a few days' supply of sleeping tablets.

If the depression continues to deepen, affecting your appetite, energy and sleep, antidepressants maybe helpful. Contact your GP, who may arrange an appointment with a psychiatrist.

If you are unable to resolve your grief, help can be arranged through your GP or one of the valuable voluntary or religious organisations. It may be enough for you to meet people and talk with others who have been through the same experience. You may need to see a bereavement counsellor or psychotherapist, either in a special group or on your own for a while.



“ How people die remains in the memory of those who live on ”

- Cicely Saunders
(Founder of Hospice Movement)

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When you lose someone



A Guide for the Bereaved

Losing someone you love is very painful. We hope this small leaflet will help you by providing some advice and support at this very difficult stage of your life.



Overwhelming feelings

When you lose someone very dear to you, you may experience all kinds of difficult and surprising emotions, such as shock, anger and guilt. Sometimes it may feel like the sadness will never end.

Whilst these feelings can be frightening and overwhelming they are normal reactions to loss. Accepting them as part of the grieving process and allowing yourself to feel what you feel is necessary for healing.

Is there a right way to grieve?

Grief is the natural response to loss. It's the emotional suffering you feel when someone you love is taken away. There is no right or wrong way to grieve but there are healthy ways to cope with the pain. You can get through it!

Grief that is expressed and experienced has a potential for healing.

How you grieve is very personal and highly individual and depends on many factors, including your personality and coping style, your life experience, your faith and the nature of the loss.

The grieving process takes time. Healing happens gradually; it can't be forced or hurried - and there is no 'normal' timetable for grieving. Some people start to feel better in weeks or months. For others it takes years. Whatever your grief experience, it's important to be patient with yourself and allow the process to naturally unfold.

Immediately following a death

In the few hours or days following the death of a close relative or friend, most people feel simply stunned, as though you cannot believe it has actually happened. This can happen even when the death was expected. The sense of emotional numbness may be a help in getting through all the important practical arrangements that have to be made.

Agitation and intense emotions

Soon, though, this numbness disappears and may be replaced by a dreadful sense of agitation, of pining or yearning for the person who has died. There can be a feeling of wanting somehow to find them, even though this is clearly impossible. This can make it very difficult for you to relax or concentrate or sleep properly and dreams can be very upsetting.

Some people feel they 'see' their loved ones everywhere they go - in the street, the park, around the house, anywhere they had spent time together.

Others feel angry - towards doctors and nurses

who did not prevent the death, towards friends and relatives who did not do enough, even towards the person who has, by dying, left them.

Another common feeling is guilt. People find themselves going over all the things they would have liked to have said or done, in their minds. They may even consider what they could have done differently that might have prevented the death. Of course, death is usually beyond anyone's control and a bereaved person may need to be reminded of this.

This state of agitation is usually strongest about two weeks after the death, but is soon followed by times of quiet sadness or depression, withdrawal and silence.

The sudden changes of emotion can be confusing to friends or relatives, but are part of the normal grieving process.

As time passes

As time passes, the fierce pain or early bereavement begins to fade. The depression lessens and it is possible to think about other things and events and to look again to the future. However, the sense of having lost a part of oneself never goes away entirely.

For bereaved partners there are constant reminders of their new singleness, in seeing other couples together and from the vision of media images of happy families. After some time it is possible to feel whole again, even though a part of you is missing. Even so, years later you may sometimes find yourself talking as though he or she were still here with you.

Letting go

The final phases of grieving is the letting go of the person who has died and the start of a new sort of life. The depression clears completely,