



*Bereavement*

The death of someone we love can be one of the most difficult experiences of life. Friends try to comfort us by saying “You mustn’t cry” or “You must be strong”. Some may even suggest that what has happened is for the best. They mean well, but do not fully understand our feelings. More than likely, you feel that the worst has happened. You may be struggling to come to terms with everything. Some may feel as if the world has come to an end, as if their life is over.

When you lose someone who was special to you, the feelings of grief are overwhelming. Unfortunately many people don’t understand grief or how it can affect us. Thus, grief is something we rarely think about, and few people want to talk about the loss.

Although grief inevitably affects our lives, we are often caught by surprise. Because we haven’t learnt what grief is and because people don’t seem to want to talk about it, sometimes the struggle is to know if our reactions are normal. No-one can anticipate the emotional and spiritual agony a major loss can bring. Life seems to lose its meaning. The sadness and the loneliness you feel seems to consume all your energy. The good news is that you won’t always feel the way you do. But for now that possibility doesn’t minimise the difficulty.

Very few people understand what is normal after a loss. Some expect us to get over it relatively quickly. As they see us apparently being strong during the funeral, often they are surprised when, later on, we may not seem to

be doing quite as well. They confuse shock with strength. Because we have not learnt what to expect after a loss, we are often caught unaware by the avalanche of emotions that may occur weeks or even months after the funeral.

## **Grief : An Emotional Response**

Grief is an emotional response to a significant loss. Your grief process is different from everyone else's because YOU are different from everyone else and the relationship you lost and what it meant to you is unique. To experience grief is to acknowledge that you have cared about someone. Now that they are gone, you are feeling the loss. You miss them. If you hadn't had a relationship or an attachment, you wouldn't be grieving. To experience grief is to acknowledge that you are human.

Grief is difficult. It is never easy to lose someone you have relied on. The death of someone we care about hurts very much. It not only affects us emotionally, but physically, intellectually and spiritually as well.

## **Key Facts About Grief & Grieving**

- Grief is normal
- The worst kind of grief is YOURS
- The way out of grief is through it
- Grief is hard work
- Your grief will take longer than most people think

- Grief is unpredictable
- A significant loss changes the way we look at life, at ourselves and at others
- Effective grief work is not done alone

### **Some Suggestions For The Grief Journey**

- **Be patient with yourself**  
Grief takes longer than you will expect, and some people need more time than others to work through their situation.
- **Give yourself permission to grieve**  
After a loss people often ask themselves “Am I losing it?” What is the IT they feel they are losing? They have lost the ordinary reference points that previously anchored their life and their sense of self. Grief is not a sign of weakness, but a sign that you are missing a special relationship. You are not losing you mind; you are reacting to the absence of someone you cared about. What you are experiencing is normal.
- **Ask for and accept help**  
Try not to isolate yourself. Accept the help and support of others and let them know what you need. Sometimes you wonder why people haven’t called or come round, but they often do not know what to do or say. Ask them to help.

- **Try to remember; try not to forget**  
Memories can be very painful. Yet your memories are trying to help you come to terms with this new situation. It is important to relive the memories we have of the person and the relationship. Eventually you will realise that memories have a healing quality, and your memories will change from causing pain to bringing great happiness. You will never forget the person, but the pain will diminish.
  
- **Accept that life is different now**  
Life will never be the same again, although that does not mean that life will not go on, or that you will never be happy or fulfilled again. Whatever happens will nonetheless be different.
  
- **Hold onto hope**  
Whilst you must never minimise the pain and difficulty of grief, you can trust someday this pain will subside and life will have meaning again. There is a purpose in all this, even if you are not able to see it. As you find the grace and strength to go on, the feelings of grief will be less painful and less frequent. You will begin to pick up the threads of your life and look toward the future with hope and even pleasure.

## **Closing Thought**

The death of someone we care about temporarily disconnects us from ourselves and the world around us. Disorientated, we search for inner balance, adapting to a new world, a new life, a new self. The grief journey helps us begin to re-centre ourselves and make the painful transition from life before the death to life after the death.

While some things can be changed, others cannot. There are some events in life you have no control over. All you can change is how you allow yourself to be affected. You can choose to be bitter and allow yourself to be a victim, or you can choose to struggle through and become a victor. You have the choice to overcome the situation or to let the situation overcome you.

You have lost someone you cared about. Although life is different now you still have a life. You can make choices now about how this loss will affect your life. Choose to be thankful for the past, choose to be resourceful in the present, choose to be hopeful for the future.