

After the death of your child



Bereavement Support Service

After the death of your child

A family's world changes forever when a child dies. It may take years to get back to a normal life, however it will be a totally different type of "normal".

FEELINGS OF GRIEF AND LOSS

Grief is a normal and healthy response to loss. Emotions can be very strong, and often involve many feelings. Some examples are:

- Numbness - shock - disbelief
- Overwhelming sadness and pain
- Anger - bitterness - fear - despondency - powerlessness
- Guilt (if only) - loneliness - relief (I'm glad he/she is over the suffering)
- Physical loss (no longer there to hug, smile, touch, smell)

RELATIONSHIP DIFFICULTIES

The ties that bind families may be strained, often to breaking point, following a child's death.

It is important in a time of crisis to keep communication channels open and for each family member to support each other and become aware of each other's needs.

Be aware that we all grieve differently. Parents may be at a different stage in their grief each day, so try to be sensitive to this occurrence.

The death of one's child is a loss like no other; there is no healing of this wound. It is always there, ragged, close to the surface, ready to bleed.

Grief is a solitary experience, there are no words of comfort or advice; for each person the situation and impact is different. We must each find our own way through.

So you embark upon your solo journey seeking meaning; you learn to live your questions, and the answers bring you closer to your own individual truth; you learn that it is okay to cry, that sadness is human.

There are dark and bleak days when the world closes in, and the future seems frozen around this singular event. But the clock cannot be turned back, the past cannot be undone; all you can do is accept the reality of what is, and learn to live within the limited world of your loss.



Suggestions for help

FIND A FOCUS FOR YOUR GRIEF

- Make a conscious effort to identify that which is not making sense about the loss.
- Do your own personal research into what has happened.
- Share with someone either in a support group or individually.
- Consider holistic care along with conventional medical care e.g. massage, aromatherapy, yoga, reiki.
- Maintain regular routine to establish or maintain order.
- Start on a regime to rebuild self esteem.
- Stay focused in the present and deal with one day at a time, rather than creating anxiety about possible future events.
- Look back and think of the positive qualities which have brought you this far in life.
- Learn about forgiveness, and how to forgive yourself when you think you have made mistakes when dealing with your loss.

RITUALS

Some people find it helpful to get through each day with certain rituals which they carry out regularly - some examples are picking a fresh flower and placing it in a special place each day - playing a piece of music at the same time each day - touching a keepsake as you get up in the morning.

Some people find it helpful to have a time to cry each day - in the shower or somewhere where this can be done in private - it helps them to enter the hurt, then move out of it. However not everyone is able to do this.

ANNIVERSARIES

These can occur daily, weekly, monthly and yearly. You may wish to have an every day or a once a year ritual - some just for you and some to share with others.

SUGGESTED COPING STRATEGIES

- Artistic pursuits - painting, writing, art, creating.
 - Maybe you could write the story of your child's life and the story of the love and care you shared.
 - Make a photo album or memory box containing mementoes.
 - Make a quilt with pieces of your child's clothing.
 - Compose a poem or song.
 - Build something in the garden and carve on it names, dates, special words. Share what you have made with others.
 - Do some physical exercise - gardening, scrubbing, running, power walking, wood chopping. All exercise has been found to be therapeutic.
 - Verbalise - Let out your anger and frustrations to someone who will listen and understand.
 - Parents who are alone may find a weight of responsibility for their living children.
 - Don't miss an opportunity to cry or laugh - celebrate when possible.
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ASK YOURSELF

What can I do to remember my child?

What can I do which will help me to heal?

What lives on from my child and how can I acknowledge it?

BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT SERVICE

The Bereavement Support Service extends the care we give to the families we serve.

Some of our families may not need this additional service, others will need and benefit from it.

Although very important, the funeral is only the first step we take in saying 'goodbye'. As you begin to work through your grief, the road ahead may seem long and lonely.

Relatives and friends will be especially helpful at the time of death and at the funeral. However, as the weeks and months pass after the death, they may not always be available to comfort you and allow you to talk about the person you love and miss so much.

We can provide support; a phone call, a letter or email, or a visit. There is always someone to talk to.



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