

The logo for Sue Ryder, featuring the name in a white, cursive script font inside a blue, rounded rectangular shape.

Sue Ryder

**Because no one
should face death
or grief alone**

Learning to live with grief

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Grief is a normal and natural reaction to loss. We all experience it at some point in our life.

Head of Bereavement, Sue Ryder

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Introduction

The death of someone close to you can be overwhelming, and you may feel a mixture of emotions. It is important to know that there is no 'standard' way

of experiencing loss and no 'right' way to grieve. This leaflet suggests some different ways to cope, and how to find support if needed.

How you might be feeling

We are all different and every person's experience of grief is different. It is very common to feel shock, guilt, anger, relief, despair and many other different emotions.

Your feelings will be influenced by many different things, including your relationship with the person, your personality, your values and beliefs, and your circumstances. The important thing is to accept that it is ok to have these feelings and to accept that grieving is a process we all have to learn to live with when someone dies.

It is also very common to experience physical symptoms at a time of grief. You might have difficulty sleeping, lose your appetite, feel anxious and/or stressed, feel drained and lacking energy, and pick up minor bugs and illnesses. We often tell people they need to look after themselves, but when you are grieving it is really important to treat yourself kindly and to give yourself the time, space and care that you need.

When will I feel better?

You may feel as if you are on an emotional rollercoaster where one minute you are coping and the next you feel overwhelmed by grief. There is no timetable for how long you will grieve, and the length of time is different for everyone. For most people, it is a long process, but over time your feelings of grief and loss will become less. Slowly you will become more familiar with the emotions you are learning to live with.



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There is no timeline for how long grief lasts, or how you should feel after a particular time. Every person's experience of grief is different.

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Will I ever feel like myself again?

Sometimes, when you are in the middle of grief, it can feel as if you will never feel like yourself again. Often your daily life and activities are disrupted because the person who has died has been a part of it. Some of the hardest things can be simple everyday activities that remind you of your loss. Learning to build a new 'normal' for yourself and finding new meanings in your activities and roles is part of the process of learning to live with grief.

When someone dies you may find that you are rebuilding your own identity. This can feel like a very hard thing to do, particularly as some of your friendships and relationships may change. You may be surprised by some of the people who might provide support and comfort to you as you adjust.

Rebuilding your life in this way can be slow. You might feel overwhelmed by grief and not able to face anything new, but over time your life will regain shape and meaning.

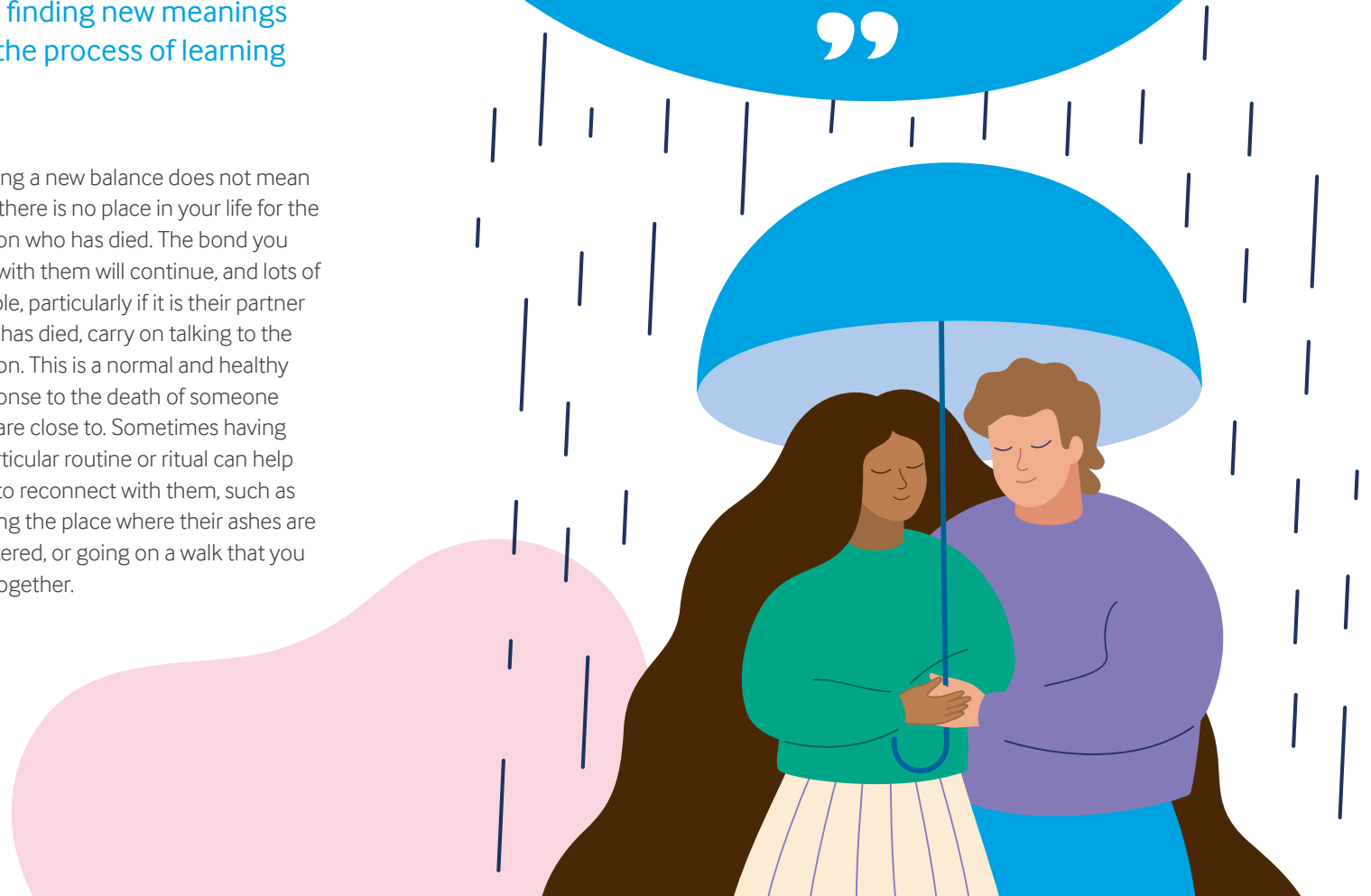
Finding a new balance does not mean that there is no place in your life for the person who has died. The bond you had with them will continue, and lots of people, particularly if it is their partner who has died, carry on talking to the person. This is a normal and healthy response to the death of someone you are close to. Sometimes having a particular routine or ritual can help you to reconnect with them, such as visiting the place where their ashes are scattered, or going on a walk that you did together.

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There is often a ripple effect, as losing someone affects all different parts of your life and you have to adjust. For example, your social life might be really different. Sometimes friendships strengthen with people you were less close to before.

Counselling Co-ordinator, Sue Ryder

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How can I cope?

Nobody knows you better than yourself, and you will find your own unique ways of coping. But looking after your physical health is always an essential part of getting through difficult times. Getting enough sleep and eating properly can help you deal with the different emotions you are feeling.

For some of us, keeping busy and throwing ourselves into different activities can help. If that helps you, try to do things even if you don't feel up to it. Others find they need to take things more slowly and take time out of their day-to-day life and activities.

Lots of people find walking really helpful as it gets you out of the house, provides some physical exercise, and can help you to think differently. Sometimes, particularly if you are feeling lonely, it can be good to see other people out and about, even if you're not ready to engage with them.

Most people find it helps to talk through their feelings. You may find it enough to talk with family or close friends, or you may find counselling either one-to-one or in a group helpful. People who have lost a partner can find it particularly helpful to go to a group and talk to other people in the same situation. On the other hand, you may feel that you don't want to talk, in which case it is important to find other ways to manage your feelings.

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I still talk to her, sometimes. Sat in my chair after work with a cup of tea, we used to talk about our day and plan our evening. I still need to run through my plans with her. Sometimes I tell her about our friends and how they're getting on. It really makes me feel better.

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Sometimes people's different ways of coping can create tensions and strains within a family, as different family members may have different ways of grieving. Perhaps one person wants to talk about and share their feelings, but another person does not want to talk and prefers to busy themselves with activities. When this happens you need to try to find a way to be sensitive to each other's needs, whilst coping with your feelings in your own way.

Important dates such as birthdays, wedding anniversaries and festivities, can be particularly hard. It normally helps if you can think beforehand about what you will do and what will help you get through the day. Some people like to create a tradition, such as visiting the person's grave, or the place where their ashes are scattered. There is no right or wrong thing to do on these different occasions, you only need to do the things that are important to you and help you to cope.



“It’s comforting to know that you’re not alone.”

Where can I find support?

Connecting with people around you and in your local community can be a really good place to find support.

The ways we can help include:

- our Online Bereavement Community, a place to connect with others who have been bereaved, share experiences and get support.
- our online Grief Guide, which contains lots of useful self-help resources to help you understand and cope with grief.
- our Online Bereavement Counselling Service, which provides free, confidential and professional support.*
- our Grief Coach personalised text messaging service, which offers tips and advice for you and gentle coaching for friends and family who want to help.
- in person at one of our Grief Kind Spaces peer-to-peer bereavement support groups (available in selected locations only, visit [sueryder.org/spaces](https://www.sueryder.org/spaces) to find your nearest Grief Kind Space).
- our online Grief Kind resources, including classes and podcasts, which help everyone to support people experiencing grief.

Visit [sueryder.org/support](https://www.sueryder.org/support)

* A short form followed by an assessment appointment is required to check your eligibility for our Online Bereavement Counselling service.

Organisations you may find helpful

For adults

GOV.UK

Gives information about registering a death, Wills, benefits and lots more.

Visit [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)

Citizens Advice

Provides information on financial support and bereavement benefits.

Visit [citizensadvice.org.uk](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

ACAS

For information related to bereavement support in the workplace.

Visit [acas.org.uk](https://www.acas.org.uk)

Samaritans

Provides emotional and crisis support 24 hours a day. **Call 116 123**

Shout

If you need to talk about how you’re feeling Shout offers text based support 24/7 to anyone in crisis.

You can **text SHOUT to 85258** and talk to them about anything.

Contact your GP or NHS Mental Health Services for additional support.

Visit [nhs.uk/mental-health](https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health)

For children and young people

Childhood Bereavement Network

Provides information, guidance and support services. **Visit**

[childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk](https://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk)

Winston’s Wish

Provides services to bereaved children, young people and their families.

Visit [winstonswish.org](https://www.winstonswish.org)

Grief Encounter

Helps children through bereavement.

Visit [griefencounter.org.uk](https://www.griefencounter.org.uk)

Childline

A free, confidential service open 24 hours a day, seven days a week for children to talk about their feelings or concerns. **Visit [childline.org.uk](https://www.childline.org.uk) or call 0800 1111**

Papyrus

Papyrus provides help for young people up to the age of 35 at risk of suicide.

Visit [papyrus-uk.org](https://www.papyrus-uk.org)

call 0800 068 4141

text 07860 039967

or email pat@papyrus-uk.org

Information is accurate at the time of printing (November 2023).

There when it matters

Sue Ryder is here to make sure everyone approaching the end of their life or living with grief can access the support they need. There is no one size fits all when it comes to how we cope and the help we need, but with our support, no one has to face dying or grief alone. We are there when it matters.

For more information about Sue Ryder

Visit: sueryder.org



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