Coping with grief
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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.

Is what I’m feeling normal?

We are all different and every person’s experience of grief is unique. It is completely normal 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 cultural background and religious beliefs and your circumstances. The important thing is to accept that is ok to have these feelings and to accept that grieving is a normal, healthy process that we all have to learn to endure when we lose someone we love.

It is also completely normal to experience physical symptoms of your grief. These can include having difficulty sleeping, losing your appetite, feeling anxious or stressed, feeling drained and lacking energy, and picking up minor bugs and illnesses. These are all normal reactions to losing someone close to you. 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 roller coaster, 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 each person. For most people it is a long process and it can take a couple of years, but over time your feelings of grief and loss will become less intense and you will find a way to cope with it as you become more familiar with the emotions you are learning to live with.

“Losing someone close to you can permeate every aspect of your life, as part of your identity is bound up in that person, and rebuilding your life takes time.”

**Sue Ryder Counselling Co-ordinator**
Will I ever get back to ‘normal’?

Sometimes, when you are in the middle of grief, it can feel as if you will never feel normal again. Often the habits and activities that have become established in your life are disrupted, because the person who has died has been a part of your day-to-day routines. Some of the hardest things can be simple everyday activities that reinforce that the person is not there now. Learning to construct a new ‘normal’ and finding new meanings in your activities and roles is part of the process of learning to live with grief.

Often, particularly if it is your partner who has died, 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 emerge and provide support and comfort to you as you adjust.
Rebuilding your life in this way can be a slow process and sometimes people feel overwhelmed by grief and can’t 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 that 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.

“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.”

Sue Ryder Counselling Co-ordinator

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 people, keeping busy and throwing themselves into different activities can help. If that helps you, try to do things even if you don’t feel up to it. Other people 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.

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 Christmas, 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.
When someone you care about is dying or has died, it’s comforting to know that help is never far away. Sue Ryder’s Online Community is a safe place to go for free, 24/7 practical and emotional support when you’re coping with the loss of a loved one.

Available from your computer, tablet or mobile and moderated by Sue Ryder, our community is there to support you whenever and wherever you need it.

Join our community at www.sueryder.org/support
You may find these organisations helpful

For adults
www.gov.uk
Gives information about registering a death, wills, benefits and lots more.

Samaritans
Provides emotional support 24 hours a day.
call: 116 123

Bereavement UK
Bereavement UK offers information about death, dying, bereavement, funerals and self-help counselling.
visit: www.bereavement.co.uk

Bereavement Advice Centre
Provides information, advice and signposting on the practical concerns that people face following a death.
visit: www.bereavementadvice.org

Cruse Bereavement Care
Provides information, advice, counselling and support for anyone dealing with bereavement.
visit: www.cruse.org.uk  call: 0808 808 1677

The Compassionate Friends
Provides support and friendship for bereaved parents and their families by those similarly bereaved. For parents who have lost a child of any age.
visit: www.tcf.org.uk  call: 0345 123 2304

Merry Widow
A popular online resource for anyone who has lost a partner.
visit: www.merrywidow.me.uk
WAY (Widowed and Young) Foundation
Provides support, advice and friendship to those who have been bereaved of a partner under the age of 50.
visit: www.widowedandyoung.org.uk

Incredible Memories
A Sue Ryder website that allows you to make an online scrapbook of memories where others can share a message, light a virtual candle or make a donation.
visit: www.incrediblememories.sueryder.org

Much Loved
An online memorial garden.
visit: www.muchloved.com

Virtual Memorial Garden
An online memorial garden.
visit: www.virtualmemorialgarden.net

Support Line
Confidential emotional support to children, young adults and adults by telephone, email and post.
visit: www.supportline.org.uk

For children and young people
Winston’s Wish
Provides services to bereaved children, young people and their families.
visit: www.winstonswish.org

Hope Again
Cruse Bereavement Care’s website for young people.
visit: www.hopeagain.org.uk  call: 0808 808 1677
(Young person’s freephone helpline)
Riprap
Support for teenagers with parents diagnosed with cancer.
visit: www.riprap.org.uk

Grief Encounter
Helps children through bereavement.
visit: www.griefencounter.org.uk

Simon Says
Supports children in Hampshire, but also has some excellent information booklets to download online.
visit: www.simonsays.org.uk

Sesame Street: When Families Grieve
An online resource for families and parents with young children.
visit: www.sesamestreet.org/toolkits/grief

The Mix
One-stop helpline for young people about any subject that links callers to most appropriate service.
visit: www.themix.org.uk call: 0808 808 4994 (every day 1pm-11pm)

Childline
A free, confidential service open 24 hours a day, seven days a week for children to talk about their feelings or concerns. They produce a Childline’s factsheet on bereavement.
visit: www.childline.org.uk call: 0800 1111

Child Bereavement Network
Provides information, guidance and support services.
visit: www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk call: 020 7843 6309
Sue Ryder supports people through the most difficult times of their lives. Whether that’s a terminal illness, the loss of a loved one or a neurological condition – we’re there when it matters.

For over 65 years our doctors, nurses and carers have given people the compassion and expert care they need to help them live the best life they possibly can. We take the time to understand what’s important to people and give them choice and control over their care. For some this may mean specialist care in one of our centres, whilst others might need support in their own home.

For more information about Sue Ryder

call: 0808 164 4572
call: healthandsocialcare@sueryder.org
visit: www.sueryder.org

@SueRyderNational
@sue_ryder

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This information contained within this leaflet is derived from evidence and our experience of providing care and is referenced.
If you would like more information on the references, please visit:
www.sueryder.org/informationstandard

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