

What is bereavement?

The death of a loved one can be devastating. For most of us, bereavement will be the most psychologically distressing experience we will ever face. Everyone experiences grief differently and there is no 'normal' or 'right' way to grieve. How we react will be influenced by many different things, including our age and personality, or cultural background and religious beliefs, our previous experiences of bereavement, our circumstances and how we cope with loss.

What we may experience

It is generally thought that there are four stages in the grieving process:

- Accepting that your loss is real
- Experiencing the pain of grief
- Adjusting to life without the person who has died
- Putting less emotional energy into grieving and putting it into something new (moving on)

You'll probably go through all these stages over time but won't necessarily move smoothly from one to the next. Your grief might feel chaotic and out of control but these feelings will eventually become less intense. You might feel:

- Shock and numbness
- Overwhelming sadness, with lots of crying
- Tiredness or exhaustion
- Anger (towards the person who has died, their illness, God)
- Guilt (for example, about feeling angry, about something you said or didn't say, or about not being able to stop your loved one dying)

Some people become forgetful or feel less able to concentrate.

All of these feelings are perfectly normal.

Coping With Grief

Some people may find some of the following suggestions useful:

- Allow yourself to rely on friends and family for support
- Talk about your feelings and about the person who has died
- Make contact with local bereavement services or a faith leader
- Avoid making major life-changing decisions especially in the early days
- Don't rely on alcohol or drugs to help you cope
- Try to eat regularly and to maintain routines (such as getting up and going to bed at the same times)
- Talk to your GP

Life will never be the same again after a bereavement but the grief and pain should lessen and there will come a time when you are able to adapt and adjust, and cope with life without the person who has died.

Many people worry that they will forget the person who has died; how they looked, their voice, the good times they had together. There are a number of ways in which you can keep their memory alive. These are just a few suggestions:

- talk about them and your special memories
- write down your memories
- keep an album of photos
- keep a collection of some of their special possessions
- do something that commemorates them, such as planting a tree, paying for a park bench or making a donation to a charity

Counselling can be helpful to give you a space to talk through your loss and how you are coping.

If you feel you may benefit from counselling or would like to know more please contact us on **01224 633131**