

Suffering a Loss?

When someone dies it can bring up a multitude of feelings depending on your relationship to them, or if they remind you someone you know. It can be an emotionally painful time, triggering complex and difficult feelings. Whether it was unexpected or if they had been ill for a while, it will often feel like a shock and the feelings of loss will affect us in different ways.

The main thing is to understand that there is no right or wrong way to grieve. Sometimes the emotional fall out can be terribly painful, and we can be shocked by how awful we feel, we may even think there's something wrong with us. In fact, all these feelings are natural. We need to be kind towards ourselves at this time, to nurture ourselves as the painful emotions arise. Whether these are feelings of sadness, anger, confusion, anxiety, bitter-sweet regret, to name but a few, we have no other choice but to allow them in. Bereavement is a process that must be gone through, it is not something we can bypass. If it is suppressed it has the tendency to rear its head in unhelpful ways at difficult times later on.

There is no right or wrong way to grieve

There are several stages to a bereavement, and we may experience these for any possible length of time. **The first 12 months after a significant loss is the hardest.**

Bereavement is a process that must be gone through

At the beginning we may be filled with difficult emotions, as if there's nothing else, this is usual. Then over time the grief will come in and recede like the tide. It is important to acknowledge this process and allow it, when the emotions come in, just be and feel them, knowing that they will go out again. Slowly, with the passing of time we grow our lives around this grief, so that although the grief has not gone away, it forms a smaller fraction of ourselves. We will remember the person and we will miss them, but the pain of the loss will subside, and we will come to a place of acceptance.

Grief will come in and recede like the tide

Friends and family may rally round to begin with, and it is important to continue to ask for help and a listening ear for as long as you need it. Remember you are not a burden on others, and you do not need to 'get over it by now'. There are no 'shoulds' with this, it takes as long as it takes, and sharing how you feel will closely bond relationships with those whom you trust.

If you are experiencing a very strong emotional reaction or after a long period of time the emotional reactions are impacting your life, it may be time to seek professional help.

Self-help Tips to Maintain Health and Energy:

- Ensure you continue to eat a healthy, balanced diet and drink enough water
- Keep to a routine, getting up in the morning and going to sleep at a reasonable time. Your sleep may be affected, so a routine will help you get back on track
- Try to incorporate some light exercise into your daily routine
- Keep talking – reach out to others, talk about what you're going through or just chat about everyday things
- Be present, just take one day at a time, respect your emotions

- Avoid quick-fix substances that may exacerbate anxiety and low mood later on
- It's okay to have a 'day off' but when it becomes more frequent it is a good idea to talk to someone professional

Resources:

University Medical Practice	0118 987 4551
University Counselling and Wellbeing Service	0118 378 4216
University Student Welfare Service	0118 378 4777
Cruse Bereavement Care	
The Samaritans	Freephone 116123