



**Heart
of Kent
Hospice**

Coping with bereavement



We're here to help

When you're coming to terms with the loss of a loved one, it's important to know that you're not alone.

Bereavement brings with it a complex range of feelings, all of which are very normal. You may experience: shock, numbness, overwhelming sadness, tiredness or exhaustion, anger, guilt, fear or loneliness. These are likely to change over the weeks, months and even years after the death of someone you love and that's totally natural.

At times, it may feel like no one truly understands what you're going through, but there are people who can identify with your experience and can help. You don't have to cope on your own.

We hope this booklet will reassure you that the emotions you're dealing with are a common part of bereavement. We've also suggested some ways to help you work through your grief and some people and organisations that can support you too.

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The grieving process

Everyone manages grief differently. There is no right way, or wrong way, to cope. Some people describe grief as juggling emotions, never quite sure which one they'll feel on any given day or at any particular time.

There are often significant stages within the grieving process. You might not experience all the stages, but it can be helpful to know that your emotions are part of a natural process.

Typical stages can include the following:

Finding it hard to accept the loss.

Nothing can prepare you for the loss of a loved one, even if they've been ill for a long time. Often that shock brings with it a sense of disbelief. You may find yourself expecting the person you've lost to walk through the door, call you on the phone or you may have vivid dreams about them. These are all feelings that help you accept that someone is gone.

Experiencing pain and incredible sadness.

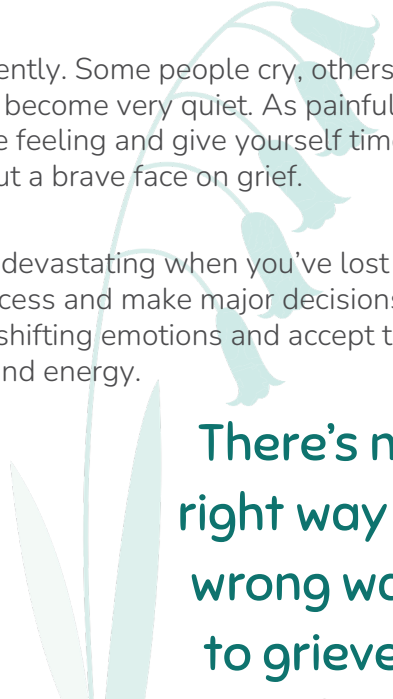
Everyone deals with the pain of grief differently. Some people cry, others lash out in anger and some might withdraw and become very quiet. As painful as it is, it's important to acknowledge how you're feeling and give yourself time to process your emotions. You don't have to put a brave face on grief.

Adjusting to life without a loved one.

The thought that life must go on can seem devastating when you've lost a loved one. It's important not to rush the process and make major decisions too quickly. Give yourself time to manage your shifting emotions and accept that adjustment is a journey that will take time and energy.

Moving on.

As hard as it seems, you will get to a point when grief won't occupy all your thoughts. Sometimes people feel guilty about moving on or fearful that they'll forget their loved one. This isn't the case. Moving on helps you to channel your emotions into new things, which is very healthy.



**There's no
right way or
wrong way
to grieve.**

Coping with grief

People often describe grief as coming in waves, sometimes gentle and calm and sometimes strong and fierce. It can be difficult to anticipate what you're going to feel, so it's important to give yourself the time and space.

Express yourself.

Talking is often a good way to help you understand what you're feeling so you can start to heal. Some people find writing and drawing about emotions can help too.

Allow yourself to feel sad.

Feeling sad and crying is a healthy part of the grieving process and can really relieve tension and internal strain. Bottling grief up is unhealthy and will just lengthen the grieving process.

Try and keep a schedule.

However hard it may feel, routine can help take away anxiety and give your life shape and purpose. Even the smallest things, like meeting friends or going for a morning walk can provide comfort.

Sleep.

Emotional strain can make you very tired. This can then cloud your thoughts and leave you short tempered and anxious. If you have persistent trouble with sleeping, it's best to seek the advice of your GP.

Eat healthily.

You might not feel like cooking, but choosing healthy food will keep your energy levels up, enabling you to manage your emotions much more effectively.

Avoid things that “numb” the pain.

You may feel tempted to run away from your feelings and numb them with alcohol or drugs. In the long run this will do much more harm than good, so seek professional advice if you feel unable to cope.

Go to counselling if it feels right for you.

Talking to someone completely independent can really help. Many people find counselling a useful way to process the confusing, and sometimes conflicting, emotions they have.

When to seek expert advice

Grief affects people in very different ways. It's important to give yourself the time and space to cope.

If you find yourself struggling with ordinary tasks like getting out of bed, eating well or feel an overwhelming sense that you can't go on, please seek advice from your GP. If alcohol or drugs have become your coping mechanism, then you should also contact your GP.

Medical professionals understand that grief can be all consuming and will be able to give you the right, practical support. You should never feel embarrassed or ashamed of what you feel; just be honest and you'll get the right support.

Supporting children

Like adults, children need time and space to process the emotions that come with bereavement. No child is too young to understand the concept of loss, although children often find it harder than adults to grasp that someone is no longer there. You may find that children move in and out of grief quite rapidly.

It's really important that you include children in the grieving process. Talk to them about what has happened and be as open and honest as you can. You might not be able to answer all their questions, and that's fine. Don't be too hard on yourself. It's OK to be honest and admit you don't know everything.

Including children in funeral planning can be a practical way to help them work through their grief and come to terms with the fact that the person they loved is gone.

Above all else, children need reassurance and to know that they are loved and safe. It often helps to keep to a routine and make sure children know what's going on and, in particular, who will be taking care of them on a day to day basis. A child's school will be able to offer additional support too.

Supporting young people

Dealing with grief can be a huge challenge for young people as they are already experiencing so many other emotional and physical changes in their life. Mood swings, changes in behaviour, a dip in performance at school and even a shift in friendship groups are all common.

They may be more reluctant to vocalise how they're feeling but, like younger children, young people need the reassurance that they are supported and cared for. They need to know that the mix of emotions they are feeling including anger and frustration are quite normal and that they are not alone.

It can be hard to get young people to open up about their emotions. Including them in the plans and preparations for a funeral can really help. Asking for their thoughts and opinions will give them a chance to work through their grief and say goodbye to a loved one in their own way.

Our Family Support Team is on hand to give extra support to families with children and young people. There are also a lot of useful organisations and websites who provide specialist support which can be found on pages 9, 10 and 11.

Grief affects everyone differently.

**It's important to give yourself the
time and space to grieve.**



How we can help

Many people are well supported in their grief by family and friends, but if you feel you would like bereavement support it is available from the Heart of Kent Hospice Family Support Team to anyone who has lost a loved one who was under the hospice's care in the last two years. We write to a patient's next of kin around 8-12 weeks after their death to tell them about our services.

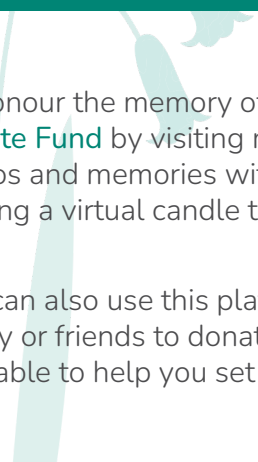
If you feel you need to speak to someone about bereavement support earlier, we run a [Bereavement drop-in session at the hospice every Wednesday](#) from 10:00am - 12:00pm (Noon). Please see page 11 for more details.

There are also details of a wide range of bereavement services available in our local community at the back of this booklet.



**Be brave and reach out, there's
no shame in asking for help.**

Create an online tribute fund



To honour the memory of your loved one, you can create a [Much Loved Tribute Fund](#) by visiting muchloved.com. This platform allows you to share photos and memories with your friends and family members while also lighting a virtual candle to mark special occasions.

You can also use this platform to fundraise for the hospice by asking your family or friends to donate in memory. The hospice fundraising team is available to help you set up the fund and choose how you want to use it.

Practical information

Heart of Kent Hospice

Here to support anyone who has lost someone close who was under our care, for up to 2 years after their death.

- 📞 Enquiries 01622 792200
- 📞 Family Support Team ext 260
- 📞 Fundraising 01622 790195
- 🌐 hokh.org
- 📍 Heart of Kent Hospice, Preston Hall, Aylesford ME20 7PU

Tell Us Once

Tell Us Once is a service that notifies multiple government authorities and agencies of someone's death on your behalf. It includes:

- HM Revenue and Customs
 - Department of Work and Pensions
 - Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)
 - Passport Office
 - The local council
- 🌐 gov.uk/after-a-death/organisations-you-need-to-contact-and-tell-us-once

Death Notification Service

Set up by leading UK banks, building societies and financial institutions, this online service allows you to report a death in one contact. Check online to see if your bank/building society is part of this scheme.

- 🌐 deathnotificationservice.co.uk

The Bereavement Register

Registering with the Bereavement Register will ensure that any correspondence to the person who has died will stop.

- 🌐 thebereavementregister.org.uk

Stop Mail

This free-of-charge service provided by the Bereavement Support Network will actively reduce unwanted mail and the likelihood of identity theft following the death of someone close.

- 🌐 stopmail.co.uk
📞 0808 168 9607

Deceased Preference Service

The Deceased Preference Service will contact companies that manage mailing lists to ensure further communications are stopped.

- 🌐 deceasedpreferenceservice.co.uk
📞 0800 068 4433

Digital Legacy

Provides advice on changing and/or closing online accounts, subscriptions and social media accounts.

- 🌐 digitallegacyassociation.org

Money helper

UK Government backed website offering advice on what to do after a death regarding, funeral costs, wills, probate, tax and debts.

- 🌐 moneyhelper.org.uk/en

Useful contacts

Bereavement contacts

Compassionate Friends

Provides a range of support from a helpline to legal support and national events.

☎ 0345 123 2304

🌐 tcf.org.uk

Bereavement Support Network

Gives advice on practical issues that need to be dealt with in the event of death.

☎ 0333 241 2496

🌐 bereavementsupportnetwork.co.uk

Age UK

Provides information and advice about dealing with bereavement.

☎ Maidstone: 01622 753618

☎ National: 0800 678 1602

🌐 ageuk.org.uk

Samaritans

24 hour helpline for anyone struggling to cope or in need of a listening ear.

☎ 116 123

🌐 samaritans.org

Kent County Council Contact Centre

Can assist you with registering a death.

☎ 03000 415151

Cruse Bereavement Care

Offers phone and online support alongside publications to help people cope with loss.

Maidstone and Medway:

☎ 0808 808 1677

🌐 cruse.org.uk

Citizen's Advice Bureau

Provides a range of benefits and practical support.

☎ 0808 278 7810

🌐 citizensadvice.org.uk

WAY Widowed & Young

For those widowed under age of 50. For more information please contact through the website.

☎ 0300 201 0051

🌐 widowedandyoung.org.uk

Mental Health Matters Helpline Kent and Medway

A confidential helpline available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

☎ 0191 516 3500

🌐 mentalhealthmatters.com

Release the Pressure - Kent

A free, confidential helpline available 24/7 for those age 16+

☎ 0800 107 0160

🌐 releasethepressure.uk

Support for children and young people

Winston's Wish

Offers a helpline, publications and therapeutic help for parents and children.

☎ 0808 802 0021

🖱 winstonswish.org

Childhood Bereavement Network

Offers practical help and advice to parents of grieving children.

🖱 childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk

Child Bereavement UK

Offers support over the phone alongside specialist sessions to support grieving children.

☎ 0800 028 8840

🖱 childbereavementuk.org

Slide Away

Provides bereavement support specifically for young people in Kent.

☎ 07970 597 715

🖱 slideaway.org

Grief Encounter Project

Offers free resources and support for children and young people.

☎ 0808 802 0111

🖱 griefencounter.org.uk

Holding On Letting Go

Kent-based charity that helps children to cope with the death of someone close to them.

☎ 03445 611 511

🖱 holdingonlettinggo.org.uk

The Hub Bereavement drop-in Wednesday 10:00am – 12:00pm

This session is for the family and important people of patients who have died whilst under the care of the hospice.

Come and speak with someone about your grief, whether you are newly bereaved, or it's been several months or even up to two years after your loss.

There is no need to pre-book.

At these sessions we aim to provide:

- Someone to listen to you
- Signposting you to other bereavement services within the Hospice and 1:1 counselling
- Signposting you to bereavement groups and activities in the locality
- A chance to talk with a counsellor or trained volunteer in confidence
- An opportunity to talk to others in a similar situation, for some knowing that they are not alone with what they are experiencing is helpful and comforting.



We are here to offer support,
advice and information to help
you through this difficult time.

hokh.org

01622 792200 enquiries@hokh.co.uk

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