

# BEREAVEMENT



**PAPYRUS**  
PREVENTION OF YOUNG SUICIDE



When someone you love dies – it can be completely devastating. Everyone will be affected by bereavement at some point in their life and it can be an incredibly tough and overwhelming time. HOPELINEUK speaks to many young people who tell us that they feel suicidal after experiencing a bereavement. So we have put together some information about bereavement, how it can feel and what kind of help is available.

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## How does it feel?

There is no right or wrong way to feel when someone you love dies. You may have good days as well as bad days. There's no set time frame for grief - it is a lifelong process. Your emotions might be quite powerful and overwhelming sometimes and yet, at other times, you may feel distant or numb.

Common feelings associated with bereavement can be shock, fear, overwhelming sadness, anger, numbness, guilt or even relief – especially if you've seen a loved one suffer for a period of time. All of these feelings are understandable and normal reactions.

Some bereavement and loss experts suggest that there are four stages of grief: accepting your loss is real, experiencing the pain of grief, adjusting to life without your loved one and, in time, putting less energy and time into grief and more into another aspect of your life. You may well experience all of these things at some point but not necessarily in a specific order. Grief can leave you feeling all over the place. In time though, these feelings can become less intense.

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## What can I do to help myself?

- **Sit with the pain.** After a significant loss, the pain can seem unbearable. Especially at first. We may feel like we're not coping, or that things will never get better. It's really important to allow ourselves to experience the pain, so that we can heal from it. Grief can often be thought of as part of a restorative or healing process. By pushing the pain away, and not allowing ourselves to confront it, we can experience it again at a later time. Some prefer this approach as it allows them to delay the pain for the time being and address other life factors. Sometimes, delaying the grieving process can be therapeutic but, inevitably, a time will come when you may feel like you are at a stage to handle certain emotions. By using support and acknowledging that things may take time to feel okay again you will be better able to cope with a loss, and less likely to develop unhealthy coping strategies that may put you at risk.
- **Let it out.** It's important to be able to express what we really feel. It's okay to not feel okay – and it's okay to cry. Being able to release your emotions and allow yourself to genuinely feel what you feel can help in the long and short term.
- **Reach out for help.** There's a popular saying that goes: "a problem shared is a problem halved". This idea is relevant when it comes to loss – reaching out to people who are compassionate and empathic can be truly healing. It is also important that we avoid those who do not empathise or offer compassion. There are a number of specialised services who offer this support depending on the type of loss a person has experienced.
- **Don't blame yourself.** Often, after experiencing a bereavement, some people reflect on what happened to cause this or what went wrong. This reflection can sometimes lead to feelings of guilt and can impact your self-esteem. It is important not

to get consumed by this guilt, to remember that death is a natural part of life and that one individual cannot take full responsibility for what has happened. Also, it is natural to sometimes feel happy after a loss, even though we are also experiencing pain at the same time – and that’s okay!

- **Give it time.** Bereavement can be like a rollercoaster. It’s going to take time for things to feel different. How long will depend on many things – most importantly the significance of the loss to you, not other people. Gradually though, feelings may change and you will adapt. Life might not be the same as before – you may experience other losses related to the bereavement – but time will make a difference. We may also need to take time to reflect, to appreciate what has changed. This kind of reflection can often bring a whole new level of perspective for some, and can even be a positive to take away from the grieving process.
- **Look after yourself.** Take time to be kind to yourself. Take time off work if you need to or have a break. Engage in an activity that you enjoy; something that feels do-able and manageable. If you need to talk about the person who’s died – that is okay and sometimes it’s really important too. You may notice things feel harder on the anniversary of someone’s death or perhaps on the birthday of the person who has died. If something like this is coming up and it’s making you feel vulnerable, plan ahead and take time to look after yourself.

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## When supporting someone else

If you are supporting someone else through bereavement don’t diminish their feelings or try and fix things. Give them space. Listen and allow them to talk freely. This will help them feel heard and less alone. It’s not your job to fix everything – just being with someone can be very valuable and comforting.

## Where can I get help from?

Bereavement can be incredibly painful and difficult to go through. While the pain from a bereavement is totally natural and understandable, it is not always easy to live with. There are lots of different services and options if you want to talk to someone about loss and bereavement.

While being bereaved and experiencing grief isn't an illness, your GP might be able to offer you some help. Your GP might be able to refer you for a service like counselling or prescribe medication if appropriate.

You don't need to see your doctor to access help as there are lots of different services that offer help. The list below outlines some different services that are available for you.



*Someewhere to turn when someone dies*

**Cruse Bereavement Care**  
**0808 808 1677**  
[helpline@cruse.org.uk](mailto:helpline@cruse.org.uk)

Advice to anyone who has been affected by a death, including bereaved military families.

**Hope Again**  
[www.hopeagain.org.uk](http://www.hopeagain.org.uk)  
Cruse's website for children & young people.

### **Bereaved Through Alcohol and Drugs (BEAD)**

Information and support for anyone bereaved through alcohol or drug use.

**Bereavement Advice Centre**  
**0800 634 9494**

Supports bereaved people on a range of practical issues via a single freephone number.

**Bereavement Trust**  
**0800 435 455**

Helpline for people who are experiencing bereavement.

**Child Bereavement UK**  
**0800 028 8840**

Supports families and provides training to professionals when a baby or child of any age dies or is dying, or when a child is facing bereavement.

**Child Death Helpline**  
**0800 282 986**

Helpline for anyone affected by the death of a child of any age, from pre-birth to adult, under any circumstances, however recently or long ago.

**Lullaby Trust**  
**0808 802 6868**

Provides support for bereaved families and anyone affected by a sudden infant death.

**NHS Choices**

Information on bereavement.

**Royal College of Psychiatrists**

Information on bereavement.

**Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide (SOBS)**  
**0300 111 5065**

[www.uksobs.org](http://www.uksobs.org)  
A self-help, voluntary organisation which aims to meet the needs and break the isolation of those bereaved by the suicide of a close relative or friend.

**Winston's Wish**  
**08088 020 021**

[www.winstonswish.org](http://www.winstonswish.org)  
Winston's Wish is a childhood bereavement charity in the UK. The charity offers a wide range of practical support and guidance to bereaved children, their families and professionals.

## **If a bereavement leads you to think about suicide:**

For some young people, the pain or difficulties related to someone dying may lead to thoughts of suicide. HOPELINEUK offers support for anyone up to the age of 35 who is experiencing thoughts of suicide.

We can give you a safe space to talk about thoughts of suicide and what's been happening in your life for suicide to feel like an option.

### **HOPELINEUK**

Call: **0800 068 4141**

Text: **07860 039 967**

Email: **pat@papyrus-uk.org**

Opening hours:

9am – 10pm weekdays

2pm – 10pm weekends

2pm – 10pm bank holidays

**www.papyrus-uk.org**

Our Suicide Prevention Advisers  
are ready to support you



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