



## Coping with Bereavement during COVID-19



An information pack to support you through a difficult period.

 @BromleyWell

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With bereavement there can be all sorts of emotions – shock, anger, sadness, guilt, confusion. However, these are all natural reactions to a bereavement and form part of the grieving process, which is different for everyone. Everyone deals with grief differently, some people laugh, cry, busy themselves with work or just feel numb. Some recover quickly, while others take their time. Grief is a natural healing process and there is no “right” way to do it.

## **Supporting someone who is bereaved**

We can feel uncomfortable about what to say when someone has been bereaved. During this time, bereaved people may be more likely to feel isolated and alone with their grief. Reaching out is more important than ever.

You might be worried about saying the wrong thing and making things worse, or be unsure what to say at all. But your support could really help. When you do talk, take your lead from them. They may want to talk to you in detail about what happened and how they feel, or they may not. Be honest about the fact you want to help but are unsure how.

Allow people to talk. Many people can find this challenging to do. But just listening, and allowing someone to share their feelings with you, can make a real difference. Some people may not want to talk at all. Sometimes just having you in the same room and sitting together quietly can be reassuring.

In the first few days and weeks after the death, the person will probably have lots of practical things to do. This is also when most family and friends make themselves available for support. However, there’s no time limit on grieving and your friend or family member might need to cry or talk about their loss for many months or years afterwards

Offer specific help if you can rather than just saying ‘let me know if there’s anything I can do’. For example, offering to help with phone calls, doing an online shop. Be specific, let the person know you want to help and ask them what they need.

### **National Covid19 NHS Bereavement Helpline –**

8am - 8pm - 0800 2600 400

A new bereavement helpline has been introduced by the NHS to support bereaved families during the Coronavirus outbreak. The helpline offers guidance, support and advice to those dealing with loss at this difficult time.

## Support for the bereaved who are unable to attend funerals

As of 24 March 2020 in the UK funerals can only go ahead at a crematorium or graveside. Only 'immediate family' are able to attend (many funeral directors are limiting numbers to 10) and they must abide by social distancing rules.

Lockdown and self-isolation may mean people are unable to say farewell to their loved ones before they pass away. The rituals of saying goodbye to people we love are really important. Not being able to attend can be devastating. Feelings of guilt can arise-this is perfectly normal. Try not to blame yourself or feel guilty for not being able to attend.

Some funeral directors are live streaming funerals to close friends and family.



- Another way we can acknowledge a funeral is to light a candle at the time of the funeral
- Play the person's favourite song at the time of the funeral
- Friends and family could all send messages or photographs -these can later be collated and made into a book of remembrance to share and keep.
- Once lockdown is over and we can all come together again, plan a memorial or private service. This can include incorporating everything you would want to say to the person to say goodbye. Where messages can be shared, memories remembered and feelings shared and acknowledged

During the Covid-19 outbreak families are not having the opportunity to be able to say goodbye in the way they wanted. Dying Matters recognises this and launched the <https://www.dyingmatters.org/page/their-time> campaign. The aim is to provide people with information and a space where they can share worries, experiences and suggestions during this unprecedented time. Check out #BeforeTheirTime and get involved.



## Support

Reach out to friends, family-online support groups-just reaching out can help to feel connected and break through the isolation just a little. For many, online groups and forums are an essential source of support.

Talking about what has happened, and about the person who has died, can help you to work through the feelings you may have. Friends and relatives can be a great source of support. Talking to other people who have been bereaved, and who have a good understanding of what you may be going through can also help. **–See the resources section at the back of this pack for services to connect with.**

- Be kind to yourself, accept that you will get overwhelmed because you're dealing with both grief and an unprecedented situation.

-Can call Cruse Bereavement helpline: 0808 808 1677. Monday-Friday 9.30-5pm (excluding bank holidays), with extended hours on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings until 8pm.

-Cruse have a <https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/coronavirus-dealing-bereavement-and-grief>

-The Good Grief Trust have advice and resources on the website <https://www.thegoodgrieftrust.org/need-know-info/coronavirus-bereavement-advice/>

**Suggestions to support yourself when you're grieving**

**Do.....**

- Talk to other people about the person who has died, about your memories and your feelings
- Look after yourself. Eat properly and try to get enough rest (even if you can't sleep)
- Give yourself time and permission to grieve
- Seek help and support if you feel you need it
- Tell people what you need

**Don't.....**

- Isolate yourself
- Keep your emotions bottled up
- Think you are weak for needing help
- Feel guilty if you are struggling to cope
- Turn to drugs or alcohol - the relief will only be temporary

**Traumatic Bereavement**

A traumatic loss is one that is sudden and unexpected, and often results from horrific or frightening circumstances.

We provide information for those affected by natural disaster, terrorist attack, suicide and other traumatic losses. A traumatic loss can give rise to special problems, and sources of further help are given at the end of each section.

We have a range of resources and information concerning traumatic bereavement that can be accessed by visiting: [www.cruse.org.uk/get-help](https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help)

Grief is a natural process, but it can be devastating. For those who need help, Cruse offers free confidential support for adults and children, and this can be by telephone or email or face-to-face.

If you were a carer and your cared for has died, [Carers UK](#) has a [forum](#) section for former carers. You may find it helpful to share how you're feeling and get support from others who have been through a similar experience. (You need to [become a member](#) before joining but this is free.)



They have also produced some tailored tips and guidance on looking after your emotional wellbeing during the COVID-19 outbreak <https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-mental-wellbeing>

## Structure and routine

Keeping up a daily routine can help a little. For example sticking to specific times to get up and go to bed, set times to text, email a friend. Start small and as you move along through your grieving process, add a few more things to your list. Make them simple, and break them down into doable steps.

## Recognising our Emotions

Lots of the emotions you might feel when you are grieving have physical symptoms. If you are feeling stressed, your heart beat may be faster. If you are angry, you might clench your jaw. Sometimes those physical symptoms might be a way of helping you to recognise your own emotions. When you notice them, make space at that time to feel those emotions, which can help you to cope with them. Try finding 5-10 minutes in your day to stop and take a breath. Stand or sit somewhere quiet where you can breathe in fresh air, and relax your mind for a moment. Even sitting by an open window may help.

## Be gentle with yourself

Be gentle with yourself and allow yourself time to grieve. Remember, grief is completely normal. It's also scary, painful and, at times, debilitating.

**Grief and isolation during the coronavirus outbreak**

- Keep in regular contact with others (via telephone or social media)
- Look after yourself and get rest
- Seek practical help from friends, family or neighbours
- Don't feel guilty if you are struggling
- Reach out if you know someone else who is struggling
- Contact the Cruse Freephone National Helpline (0808 808 1677)

## Help With Meeting Funeral Costs

### **DWP Bereavement Support Payment**

For further support from the Department of Working Pensions after someone has died (following on from the letter people may receive).

Hours: Monday – Friday: 8am – 6pm Phone: 0800 731 0469

Website: <https://www.gov.uk/bereavement-support-payment/how-to-claim>

### **Funeral Expenses Payment**

If you get benefits, you might be able to get help to pay for the funeral of a partner, close relative, close friend or child you were responsible for

Telephone: Bereavement Service helpline: 0800 731 0469, Textphone: 0800 731 0464 Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 3.30pm

Website: <https://www.gov.uk/funeral-payments>

### **Funeral Costs Advice – ‘Down to Earth’**

Whether faced with an immediate bereavement or worried about future costs, we can support you to plan an affordable and meaningful funeral.

Hours: Monday – Friday: 8am – 6pm Phone: 020 8983 5055

Website: [www.quakersocialaction.org.uk/we-can-help/helping-bereavement/down-earth/how-it-works](http://www.quakersocialaction.org.uk/we-can-help/helping-bereavement/down-earth/how-it-works)

Email: [downtoearth@qsa.org.uk](mailto:downtoearth@qsa.org.uk)

## Supporting bereaved children through difficult times

Frightening events widely reported in the media, such as the coronavirus pandemic, can cause children to worry about themselves and others. It is normal for children to feel unsettled when something scary is happening or has happened, and many will be upset, sad or fearful at times. Children who have been bereaved are likely to show a stronger reaction and may worry that they or someone they know will die.

**Here are some tips to help you support a bereaved child:**

### **Talk**

Children and young people often find it helpful if they can talk about what is happening, helping them to make sense of events and feel less afraid. Even young children are likely to hear reports in the media or overhear adults talking about deaths due to coronavirus, or the risk of death from becoming ill with the virus.

It's important to talk about their fears or anxieties honestly and openly in age-appropriate language. It may also help to restrict the amount of media coverage and social media they are exposed to, and balance this with other activities and positive things to focus on.

Children's understanding of death varies with their stage of development and it can be helpful to understand why children may respond differently. Our website has information which can help you understand and accommodate these differences and you may find it useful to watch our short guidance film [Children's understanding of death at different ages](#).

### **Be honest**

Give children honest, factual information in language appropriate to their age and level of understanding, and be guided by their questions. Children tend to pick up when questions are avoided and may then imagine all kinds of things, causing further anxiety. It's not necessary to go into detail but it will be helpful to explain things that affect them directly, such as why they are being asked to wash their hands regularly and how the virus is spread, why their school has closed, why they can't visit a grandparent or why a parent is working from home.

### **Acknowledge concerns**

Bereaved children may be concerned about someone they know becoming ill or even dying. Explain that some people will have no symptoms and will be fine, most people will experience only a mild form of the virus and will get better, but some people are more vulnerable and so we need to make sure they are protected. Be honest though and don't shy away from explaining that some people may die, as children need to trust that you are being honest and open with them, so that they can ask you other questions with confidence.

**Create routines**

Currently, keeping to usual, daily routines might be difficult. But routines can be reassuring to children when everything else seems to be disrupted. If you are at home with your child, try to keep to regular routines such as meal times, school work, breaks, play and bedtime.

Children feel more in control, and therefore less fearful, if given simple clear jobs to do, such as washing their hands properly, or simple jobs around the house.

**Get support**

If you are struggling with your own reactions, try to get support for yourself. Children and young people are quick to pick up on the distress of others around them, even if the adults are trying to hide their feelings.

For guidance on supporting a bereaved child, please contact Child Bereavement UK:

**Helpline: 0800 02 888 40**

**Live Chat** via [childbereavementuk.org](https://www.childbereavementuk.org)

**Email** [support@childbereavementuk.org](mailto:support@childbereavementuk.org)

9am-5pm, Monday-Friday (except Bank Holidays).

**Support and resources for children can be found under the resources section at the back of this pack.**

# Resources

## Culturally Specific Bereavement Support

### **Muslim Bereavement Support Service**

Supporting bereaved women who have lost a loved one.

Phone: 020 3468 7333

Website: [www.mbss.org.uk](http://www.mbss.org.uk) Email: [info@mbss.org.uk](mailto:info@mbss.org.uk)

### **The Muslim Youth Helpline (MYH)**

Award winning registered charity which provides pioneering faith and culturally sensitive services to Muslim youth in the UK. The helpline service is open 7 days a week, 365 days a year including Bank Holidays and Eid. Current opening hours are:

Telephone: 0808 808 2008 Monday to Sunday : 4pm-10pm

Website: [www.myh.org.uk/](http://www.myh.org.uk/)

### **Eternal Gardens Bereavement Support**

Bereavement counselling sessions. An Islamic counsellor will provide an Islamic perspective on death and how to cope with loss. Runs from the Tooting community support centre provides free bereavement support. If you are not local than don't worry as the team can come to you or arrange for sessions via skype or call.

Website: [www.eternalgardens.org.uk/bereavement-support](http://www.eternalgardens.org.uk/bereavement-support)

### **Jewish Bereavement Counselling Service**

Phone: 0208 951 3881 Website: [www.jbcs.org.uk](http://www.jbcs.org.uk)

Email: [enquiries@jbcs.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@jbcs.org.uk)

### **Bereavement Trust Helplines in Other Languages**

Urdu & Gujarati Bereavement Helpline: 0800 9177 416 Cantonese & Mandarin

Bereavement Helpline: 0800 0304 236

Website: [www.bereavement-trust.org.uk](http://www.bereavement-trust.org.uk)

## For People Who Have Lost Their Partners

### **WAY (Widowed and Young) Foundation**

Peer to peer support groups for men and women aged 50 or under when their partner dies. Run by a network of volunteers who have been bereaved at a young age themselves.

Website: [www.widowedandyoung.org.uk](http://www.widowedandyoung.org.uk)

### **WAY Up**

Peer support for widows/widowers in their 50s and 60s, creating national, regional and very local meets. They communicate with members via their forum, so callers will need to be comfortable using the internet.

Registration is free and simple, and can be done on their website:

Website: [www.way-up.co.uk](http://www.way-up.co.uk)

### **Merry Widow**

Personal website set up by a young widow, providing support for anyone who has lost a partner via online peer to peer community forums and information.

Website: [www.merrywidow.me.uk](http://www.merrywidow.me.uk)

## For Bereaved Parents

### **Child Death Helpline**

Calls answered by a trained volunteer who has also lost a child and understands the feelings that surround the death of a child. They offer a confidential, safe environment where you can talk openly about your child's life and death, and provide support not only at times of crisis but also for the on-going needs over your lifetime.

Helpline: 0800 282 986 – (Free from landlines)

Helpline: 0808 800 6019 – (Free from mobiles)

Hours: Helpline Monday – Friday: 10am – 1pm, Tuesdays and Wednesdays: 1pm – 4pm, Every evening: 7pm – 10pm

Website: [www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk](http://www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk)

### **The Lullaby Trust**

Support for families, friends, carers and professionals after the sudden and unexpected death of a baby or young toddler. Hours: Monday – Friday: 10am – 5pm, Weekends and Bank Holidays: 6pm – 10pm

Helpline: 0808 802 6868

Website: [www.lullabytrust.org.uk](http://www.lullabytrust.org.uk)

Email: [support@lullabytrust.org.uk](mailto:support@lullabytrust.org.uk)

### **The Compassionate Friends**

Offer bereaved families support after the death of a child of any age. Has an online Forum where you can talk online and get support from other bereaved parents.

Helpline: 0345 123 2304 Hours: 10am – 4pm and 7pm – 10pm: every day of the year  
Website: [www.tcf.org.uk](http://www.tcf.org.uk) Email: [helpline@tcf.org.uk](mailto:helpline@tcf.org.uk)

### **Stillbirth & Neonatal Death (SANDS)**

The Sands free Helpline provides a safe, confidential place for anyone who has been affected by the death of a baby, however long ago. Their experienced Helpline Team are there to listen and offer support and information without judgement.

Helpline: 0808 164 3332 Monday – Friday: 9.30am – 5.30pm, plus Tuesdays and Thursdays: 6pm – 10pm  
Website: [www.uk-sands.org](http://www.uk-sands.org) Email: [helpline@uk-sands.org](mailto:helpline@uk-sands.org)

## **Resources for children and families**

### **Free information book explaining the Coronavirus to children,**

Illustrated by Gruffalo illustrator Axel Scheffler. Free for anyone to read on screen or print out (but with an invitation to donate to NHS charities), the book is all about the coronavirus and the measures taken to control it in language suitable for 5-9 year olds. [https://nosycrowcoronavirus.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/Coronavirus\\_ABookForChildren.pdf](https://nosycrowcoronavirus.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/Coronavirus_ABookForChildren.pdf)

### **Winston's Wish UK**

National helpline offering support, information and guidance to children, young people and anyone caring for a child/young person who has been bereaved. The trained staff can listen, offer support, provide information, give options and practical suggestions about how to deal with bereavement and anyone affected. They also have a message board for young people on their website.

Helpline: 08088 020 021  
Website: [www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk)

### **Child Bereavement UK**

Supports families when a child of any age dies or is dying, or when a child is facing bereavement.

Helpline: 0800 02 888 40 Monday – Friday: 9am – 5pm  
Email: [support@childbereavementuk.org](mailto:support@childbereavementuk.org)

### **Grief Encounter**

Grief Encounter aims to provide support to anyone who has suffered from bereavement. They offer support via their helpline. Their website has resources for children, teenagers, adults and professionals.

Helpline: 0208 371 8455 Monday – Friday: 9am – 5pm  
Website: [www.griefencounter.org.uk](http://www.griefencounter.org.uk)  
Email: [support@griefencounter.org.uk](mailto:support@griefencounter.org.uk)

### **Hope Support Services**

Support services available to anybody aged 11 – 25 when a close family member is diagnosed with a life-threatening illness.

Telephone: 01989 566 317

Email: [help@hopesupportservices.org.uk](mailto:help@hopesupportservices.org.uk)

### **Young Minds**

Provides expert knowledge to professionals, parents and young people through the Parents' Helpline, online resources, training and development, outreach work and publications.

Helpline: 0808 802 5544 Monday – Friday: 9.30am – 4pm

Website: [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

Email: [ymentquiries@youngminds.org.uk](mailto:ymentquiries@youngminds.org.uk)

### **Rainbow**

A national charity aiming to make a positive impact on the lives of children, young people and adults grieving a significant and often devastating loss in their lives.

Website: [www.rainbowsqb.org](http://www.rainbowsqb.org)

## **Pet Bereavement**

### **Blue Cross For Pets**

Telephone and email support provided by trained volunteers, for people in distress due to the death, loss or separation of their pet.

Hours: 8:30am – 8:30pm: 7 days a week

Helpline: 0800 096 6606

Website: [www.bluecross.org/pet-bereavement-support](http://www.bluecross.org/pet-bereavement-support)

Email: [pbssmail@bluecross.org.uk](mailto:pbssmail@bluecross.org.uk)

# Other Resources

## **Bromley Bereavement Service**

Bereavement service offering free telephone and face-to-face counselling.  
Telephone counselling offered during Covid-19.

Telephone: 0208 768 4599

Website: [www.stchristophers.org.uk/bromley-bereavement-service](http://www.stchristophers.org.uk/bromley-bereavement-service)

## **Cruse Bereavement Care**

Support, advice and information to anyone affected by bereavement

Telephone: 0808 808 1677 (Weekdays, 9.30am-5pm. Open until 8pm on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday)

Website: [www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)

## **Grief Talk**

Helpline which supports bereaved children and their families to help alleviate the pain caused by the death of someone close. All calls taken by a fully trained Grief talk counsellor.

Helpline: 0808 802 0111 Monday to Friday 9am-9pm

Website: [www.griefencounter.org.uk/griefftalk](http://www.griefencounter.org.uk/griefftalk)

## **Sudden Bereavement Helpline**

Sudden is a charitable initiative for suddenly bereaved people and the people caring for them.

Helpline: 0800 121 6510 between 10am and 2pm Monday to Friday –  
(If you are calling outside these hours, Sudden suggest talking to their friends at the National Bereavement Partnership between 7am and 10pm on 0800 448 0800 for emotional support)

Website: <https://www.suddendeath.org/covid-19-bereavement/advice-for-bereaved-people>

## **Survivors of Suicide Loss**

Forget-Me-Not offers support for all those affected by suicide loss, the group is self-led, and informal where you can connect with other survivors.

Telephone: 07519 105354

Website: [survivorsofsuicidloss.org.uk](http://survivorsofsuicidloss.org.uk) Email [sosl.orpington@gmail.com](mailto:sosl.orpington@gmail.com)