



UNIVERSITY of  
**BRADFORD**

Counselling Service

# Bereavement

*Information  
and self-help*

# What is Bereavement?

We all experience loss at some stage in our lives; it is natural and grief is a normal response. Loss is normally associated with a death, but we can experience loss in other situations too; an injury or disability; the loss of a job. However, the most severe loss we are likely to have to cope with is the death of someone close to us.

You may feel that you are the only person who has ever felt as you do, and you may react in several different ways, both physical and emotional. There may be physical feelings of nausea, stomach-ache or pains elsewhere in your body. There will also be emotions such as sadness, depression, anger or guilt. You will need to heal from a bereavement.

It is important to remember that each person will experience grief in a different way. There is no right or wrong way to grieve, it is very individual. Grief is a natural part of life.

## How will I feel?

### Shock

The initial reaction may be one of shock. You may feel numb and have a sense of disbelief: 'this isn't really happening'. It is normal to search for something when you lose it, and it can be common for people to search for the person who has died. You may think that you have seen the person who has died or that you have heard them speak your name. This type of experience can be frightening, but you are not 'going mad'. This reaction will diminish with time.

### Anger and Guilt

Anger is a feeling that often surprises people who are bereaved. You may find yourself feeling angry with the person who has died for abandoning you. It is quite common for people to ask the question 'why?', 'why me?' and think such things as 'it isn't fair!' Sometimes people turn their anger in on themselves and feel guilty. You may accuse yourself of all sorts of things and blame yourself for the loss. You may feel 'if only I....' or 'I should have...' Try to remember that there are many events that are not in your control.

## Depression and Loneliness

There may be a time in your grieving when you feel that things will never get better. You may feel that it isn't worth bothering any more. You may feel lonely and the loneliness is made worse by having any extra responsibilities you have to carry. Depression and despair after bereavement is very common and you may feel tearful, sad, withdrawn and very tired. You might experience problems sleeping or changes in your pattern of eating. Should these problems become severe you may need to visit your doctor.

All these feelings are common in bereaved people and are a normal part of life. They will get better.

## Where can I find help?

The natural place to go for help is to your family and friends. Taking time to talk about the person who has died can be very helpful. You may find that you need to do this quite often at first. There is nothing wrong with this, it is a normal part of grieving. It may take some time for you to begin to recover from bereavement, up to a year or sometimes longer. It is important to be patient with yourself.

Not everyone will have family and friends that they can talk to or you may fear upsetting them too. You may want to talk to someone who is independent, such as a counsellor or your doctor.

## Things that might help

- Express your feelings, it is ok to cry.
- Talk. Talking about the person who has died is a normal part of the healing process. Try talking to a friend.
- Be kind to yourself, don't push yourself too hard.
- Get plenty of rest; this will give you the energy you need to face each day.
- Keep yourself healthy, eat well and take regular exercise.
- Ask for help if you need it, and accept it if offered. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness; rather it shows that you are brave enough to do something for yourself.
- Make an appointment to see a Counsellor by contacting the Counselling Service .

### On-line resources/self-help:

[www.bradford.ac.uk/counselling](http://www.bradford.ac.uk/counselling) for an extensive range of information and self-help material or to book an appointment.

## *Contacting the Counselling Service*



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