

YOUR HEALTH

YOUR BEREAVEMENT



When someone dies it can be one of the most difficult and unpredictable experiences of your life. The weeks, months and sometimes the years following a bereavement can be a bewildering and overwhelming time. You may find the following information helpful.

Your experience

Bereavement is something which most people experience at some time in their lives, and we all react to it in different ways.

Shock almost always affects you, even if you were anticipating the death, you may experience an emotional numbness.

At this time people are often surprised at how well they cope. It can be hard to accept the loss which means you may find yourself trying hard to deny that the death has occurred, so it is not unusual to think you have heard or seen the dead person.

Common experiences can be confusion, affecting concentration and finding making decisions difficult. It is not unusual to feel a sense of panic about how you will cope and how uncertain life is, or may be. You may experience despair and depression, finding that you have lost all interest in living. You may feel there is no point in going on or that nobody else could possibly experience what you are going through.

All these are natural reactions to bereavement and not a sign that you are 'going mad' or letting your friends and family down.

Anger, guilt, panic and self pity are all normal feelings after a death. If you do experience these emotions, you may feel you ought to hide them, but they too are part of bereavement. Don't be afraid to share them with a sympathetic listener.

With the passage of time, when the pain has eased somewhat, you will find yourself being able to remember your loved one without becoming so distressed. This can be a time for you to start taking up life afresh. This might seem disloyal to the person who has died, but what has happened in the past is always part of you and is not affected by enjoying the present.

Grief is a very individual process and we each react differently, so don't feel that you are in any way abnormal if yours does not appear to follow the pattern outlined above.

It is important to allow yourself to grieve; but it is also important to take a break from grieving from time to time and eventually to put it aside, even though you will never put aside the memories of the one you loved.

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Take care of yourself

- Drink lots of water, juices etc.
- Try to eat reasonably even if you are not enjoying it
- Sleeping may be difficult for you, but try to establish a regular pattern of rest
- Stay in touch with friends and relatives. Go out, even though you feel you don't have energy. Reach out to others
- Exercise (even a little walking). This will help your appetite, sleep and general well-being

Bereaved people can often feel isolated and that no one understands what they are going through. Sometimes this is also difficult to understand yourself and to make sense of what you are feeling. Some people may find they benefit from the support of someone not closely involved in their life.

The St Helena Bereavement Support team can help and offer support through giving information, telephone contact, one-to-one support and group support (therapy / meetings).

Further Information

Please contact the Bereavement Support team between Monday and Friday, 9am to 5pm, on 01206 984 274 or you can make a self referral on the website:

sthelena.org.uk/referrals

If you feel you do not need support from Bereavement Support at the moment, we want you to know that we will be here for you in the future, should you need help.

Bereavement Cafes

St Helena Hospice currently runs free Bereavement Cafés in Myland and West Bergholt, with new cafés opening soon in Elmstead Market, Frinton and Walton. No booking or referral is needed and everyone is welcome.

If you or someone you know would benefit from some informal support after a bereavement, we'd really encourage you to come along.

Visit www.sthelena.org.uk/cafe for the latest information on dates and venues.

Remembrance Services & Appeals

St Helena Hospice holds remembrance services regularly throughout the year, to which you are warmly invited. These services support you in remembering the person who has died.

We also run small in-memory appeals at certain points in the year where people are able to make a special dedication to their loved ones in return for a donation to St Helena. If you would like to be kept up to date with memory initiatives, please email memories@sthelena.org.uk

Alternatively, information on current services and appeals can be found on our website sthelena.org.uk