

Self help matters.

Helping you to find your solutions

Bereavement and Loss

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Any form of loss can be painful; anything from ending a relationship or losing a job to the death of someone close to us. The process of grieving can take time, from a year to a lifetime, but everyone's different and so are the circumstances. What is universal is that the pain hurts.

Grieving is not just about one feeling but a whole succession of feelings. The sequence in which we experience them is often unique. Some of us go through each stage sequentially while others do around or can get stuck in one stage.

Stages of Bereavement

Shock – Numbness and Denial

Immediately after the death or loss, you'll experience a sense of shock, not really believing it's happened to you. After the initial shock, you probably won't believe it, denying what's happened.

Anger – Resentment and Aggression

Anger is a normal response to loss. It's part of the grieving process. You might find yourself angry at people around you, your family, doctor or hospital ("Why couldn't more have been done?"). You'll want to blame people, maybe yourself or (and this is surprisingly common) feel angry at the person who's died ("How could you do this to me?").

Sorrow – Despair and Guilt

This can be a gut-wrenching stage when, after the funeral or memorial service and the well-wishers have disappeared, you realize that "this is it", that you have to adapt to a new life without the person. You may feel some sense of guilt too ("I wish I'd seen them more or been a better person to them").

Depression – Apathy and Disconnection

After the initial raw feelings of pain have subsided, you may find yourself feeling down, a sort of depression. This is normal. You probably won't feel very sociable or be bothered to do anything. As some time might have passed now, friends might have stopped checking to see if you're OK. You may feel a sense of being on your own with it all. But grieving takes time.

Acceptance – Revival and Reconnection

You know you've moved on when you start to get out more, get energy or enthusiasm back and reconnect with people and life in general. You still remember the person but without the really debilitating feelings you had at the start. This isn't a fixed point and you may still have bad days when triggers bring back situations and memories. But in time, these memories will become less sad and perhaps tinged with a happy reflection of the good times you had with the person.

Transformation – Growth and Enlightenment

This is not a stage everyone experiences, so don't expect it. But some people find that after the trauma of loss, they find a change in something about themselves – their values, a different perspective on life, more meaning or a change in their belief system. This can feel like a positive which has emerged from a negative. Life can be strange.

Self-care is vital. Be good to yourself. Look after yourself. Eat well, exercise, try to have a decent amount of sleep and tentatively engage with other people. Avoid using alcohol as a mood enhancer or stabiliser.

It's good to talk. You may want some space to be on our own and that's fine. But sometimes you may need to express what you're feeling. The key is finding the "right people to talk to" – a friend or family member, or perhaps someone impartial like a counsellor or someone from the Multi-Faith Centre.

Things will get better in time.

Resources

Multi-Faith Chaplaincy

Support and advice in times of stress, crisis, bereavement or illness



Telephone: 01224 272137

Email: chaplaincy@abdn.ac.uk

www.abdn.ac.uk/chaplaincy

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN SERVICES & SUPPORT

A range of support resources for everyone at University



www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/support

BIG WHITE WALL

Online community of people who are anxious, feeling low or not coping who support and help by sharing what's troubling them. This is a free, online, moderated service and confidential.



Opening Hours: Online

www.bigwhitewall.com

Cruse Bereavement Care Scotland

Free bereavement care and support through one-to-one counselling or local support groups.



Telephone: 0845 600 2227

Email: info@crusescotland.org.uk

www.crusescotland.org.uk

The Compassionate Friends (TCF)

A charitable organisation of bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents dedicated to the support and care of other similarly bereaved family members who have suffered the death of a child or children of any age and from any cause.



Telephone: 0345 123 2304

(Open every day of the year from 10:00 – 16:00 & 19:00 – 22:00)

www.tcf.org.uk/

If you are experiencing a crisis - please contact any of the following

- **Emergency Services** - telephone 999 (Free) 24 hours
- **Samaritans** - telephone 116 123 (Free) 24 hours
- **Breathing Space** - telephone 0800 83 8587 (Free) Mon-Thu 6pm-2am, Fri-Sun 6pm-6am
- **Nightline** - telephone 01224 272829 (local rate) term-time only, between 20.00-08.00
- **NHS 24** - telephone 111 (Free) 24 hours

For other support resources, please see - www.abdn.ac.uk/counselling