

Bereavement from Coronavirus

Information for families and carers

**Clinical Psychology and
Neuropsychology**

This document can be provided in different languages and formats. For more information please contact:

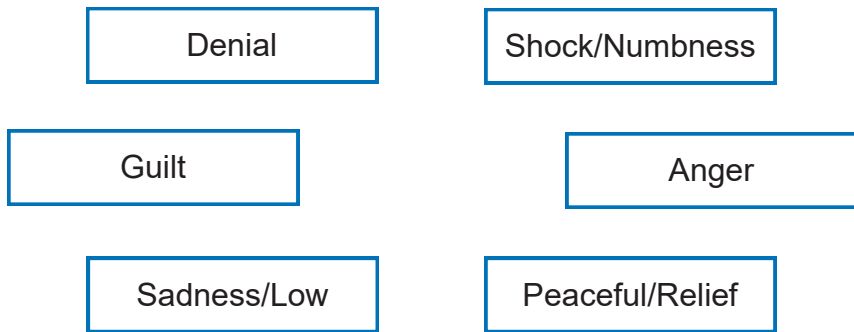
Clinical Psychology and Neuropsychology Department
Queen's Medical Centre
Derby Road
Nottingham NG7 2UH
Tel: 0115 924 9924 ext 86165

The coronavirus has led to the tragic loss of lives across all parts of the world. Bereaved people will not only be facing having to process the loss of their loved ones, but are likely to have reduced social support networks and dealing with isolation themselves.

The following information may be helpful to those bereaved from coronavirus but also from other causes during the coronavirus pandemic.

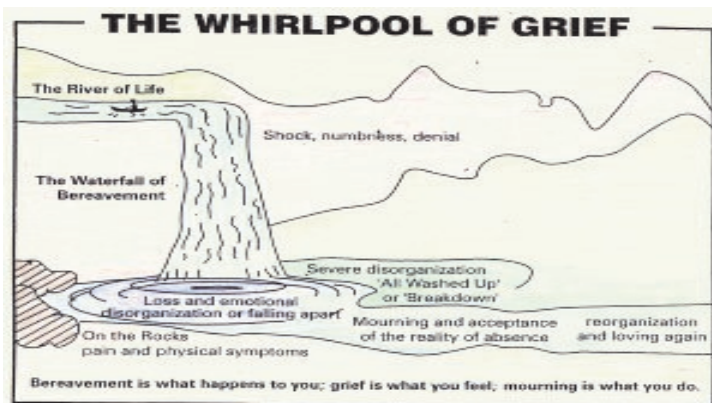
Grief in adults

There is no right or wrong way to feel when you have experienced bereavement. Most people can feel lots of different emotions at different times which can change quickly including:



If the bereavement was because of coronavirus you may be experiencing additional challenges because of the death being sudden and unexpected.

You might not have had the opportunity to see your loved one or to have said goodbye and so the death might not feel real to you.



Source: www.careforthefamily.org.uk

Grief in isolation

It is likely as a bereaved person you will have to cope with your loss whilst you are self isolating because of coronavirus. You might be unwell yourself or be concerned that you might become unwell because of the pandemic. You might also be looking after or caring for other people who also share your concerns.

The current restrictions might mean that you are in your house / flat alone and feel isolated at a time when you would value the presence and support of those around you. Getting support from family and friends may therefore be limited.

Many different areas of business are shut down or offering reduced services and so making arrangements for things or getting support from professionals may be more difficult.

These differences to bereavement may make your emotions more intense; however this might not be the case. You might feel a greater sense of community and empathy from people, with others going through similar experiences themselves.

What can I do to help myself?

Feel what you feel

Give yourself permission to experience different emotions and try to release expectations of being calm and in control all the time. This will be a challenging time and letting go of the struggles and letting feelings just be there can help.

Keep in touch

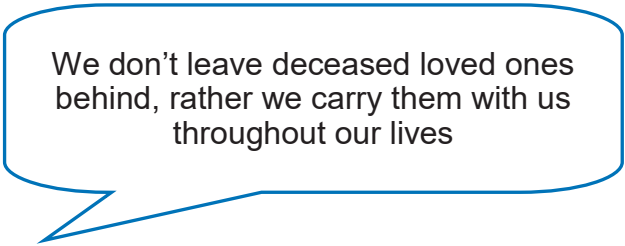
Social distancing and isolation can restrict seeing friends and family. Using whatever technology is available to you can help you stay connected and share your experiences of grief or memories of your loved ones to help feel less alone.

Talking and listening

Discussing your feelings and memories if you want and letting others talk to you. Sometimes just a listening ear or you doing the listening can be a powerful way of helping

Having breaks

Talking about other things when possible can act as a distraction.



We don't leave deceased loved ones behind, rather we carry them with us throughout our lives

Happier times

Reminding yourself of happier times with photographs and keepsakes can give some comfort. Sometimes this can trigger feelings of guilt but this can be normal as part of the grieving process.

Look after yourself physically

It can help to try to stick to routines, with sleep and breaks. If you are allowed to go for a short walk or get some fresh air and eat a good diet, although eating little and often can be easier.

Be aware of ineffective coping

Try not to use smoking, alcohol or other drugs to deal with your emotions. If you are feeling overwhelmed there is professional support available to help you (see further information section).

Grief is not a disorder, a disease or a sign of weakness.
It is an emotional, physical and spiritual necessity...
The only cure for grief is to grieve.

Earl Grollman

Supporting children and young people with grief

Whilst it might be painful, children will feel safer and more secure about things when their parents or caregivers provide clear, honest, age appropriate information about the death of someone they love.

Children might not want to talk straight away, but they benefit from knowing that you are there and available should they want to talk.

They might feel more comfortable demonstrating their thoughts and feelings via play or through art. Younger children might display changes in behaviour (eating, sleeping, toileting, interactions with siblings for example), not with words.

Children might need lots of physical reassurance and support, especially at the moment. Hugs can be a great way to demonstrate care, even when it is hard to put things into words.

There is no right way to grieve, everyone does it their own way.

Activities for supporting children

- Recalling favourite memories with the person might be helpful. You could talk about them, draw them out together or look at photos or videos of shared times in favourite places. You could even draw or paint pictures of that special place. It might be helpful to think about the things that they did that made you laugh together. These could form a memory box to keep.
- It could also be helpful to think about ways to say goodbye to the special person.
- Some people might prefer to write a letter to the person who has died.
- Video calls with members of the wider family. These could be a way to share stories and memories about the person who has died.
- Family members could share drawings, stories, photos, songs or poems as a way to remember. This could be informal or in a more structured style, like a memorial event.
- If it is possible to attend a funeral or wake, then evidence suggests that including and involving children can help them make sense of what has happened and give them awareness of the shared experience and support available.

Funerals

Funerals are often an important service to help you process the death of your loved one. They are an opportunity for you to come together in your grief, offer support to one another and say goodbye.

Due to the coronavirus, funerals are unlikely to go ahead in the same way which can cause some challenges with your grief.

Guidelines for funeral directors are constantly changing and so you are advised to consult with your individual funeral directors about the most up to date rules for funerals. Some of the changes which might impact you are:

- Only close family members able to attend.
- Social distancing rules adhered to.
- Services may be much shorter.

Some ideas to help support saying goodbye with current restrictions:

- Making recordings or readings for funerals if you are unable to attend.
- Many funeral directors are offering live screenings of funerals to allow friends and family to watch from home.
- Holding separate memorials at a later date to allow continued support to each other.
- Setting aside a time for yourself to have a private goodbye to your loved one at home.

When should you seek professional help?

People vary in terms of the time frame for them feeling able to return to normal. Sometimes feelings can continue longer term and cause difficulties to people wanting to move forward with their lives. In these circumstances it can be useful to visit your GP.

Further information

Further information about bereavement and services available for additional support can be found here:

NUH information

www.nuh.nhs.uk/advice-for-patients

www.nuh.nhs.uk/bereavement-services

Adult bereavement support

www.cruse.org.uk

www.bereavement-trust.org.uk

Child bereavement support

www.winstonswish.org

www.childbereavementuk.org

Feedback

We appreciate and encourage feedback. If you need advice or are concerned about any aspect of care or treatment please speak to a member of staff or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS):

Freephone: 0800 183 0204

From a mobile or abroad: 0115 924 9924 ext 65412 or 62301

Deaf and hard of hearing: text 07812 270003

E-mail: pals@nuh.nhs.uk

Letter: NUH NHS Trust, c/o PALS, Freepost NEA 14614, Nottingham NG7 1BR

www.nuh.nhs.uk

The Trust endeavours to ensure that the information given here is accurate and impartial.