

Help with bereavement during the Covid 19 pandemic

During this pandemic many people are facing a tragic loss of life, often under very difficult circumstances.

Bereaved families will have to deal with increased trauma whilst they are cut off from some of their usual support network.

This is a strange and distressing time to be grieving and isolated. Being bereaved can be one of the loneliest experiences you or someone you love may go through. Talking, and being with friends and family, can be one of the most helpful ways to cope after someone close to us dies. However, we find ourselves in a situation where remaining physically isolated from others is sadly necessary – to prevent many more people becoming bereaved.

This isolation can make feelings of loneliness and grief much more intense. You may be isolated with your family, and although this at times can be a support, sometimes tensions and resentments can be magnified making it difficult to help each other. If your children and teenagers are isolated it can be difficult to keep them occupied and deal with your own emotions and fears at the same time. The impact of dealing with a bereavement, compounded with feelings of worry about external situations can mean that feelings of grief aren't fully expressed.

Isolation can also make it harder to process grief. At times like this when there is a constant stream of new and distressing information, you can find yourself distracted from dealing with your grief. You might be worrying about the situation as a whole, or worrying about yourself or others.

How you can help yourself

Firstly, while you may feel alone (and in some cases are, physically) know that you don't have to be alone with your grief.

There are many brilliant helplines (listed below). You can also call or text your friends and family. If you find some of them are not responding in the way you hoped this is often about their own fears and situation. Or they might be feeling helpless, as they know they can't fix your grief. It can help to explain what you need at this time – whether that is someone to call in the middle of the night or someone you can share funny stories about the person who has died with. Try to connect as much as you are able to, even though the thought of a video call may feel overwhelming it may be exactly what you need.

Look after yourself and get rest. This can sound obvious but at these times it is so easy to want to hide away. We are being encouraged to! But do try and get some fresh air or sunlight each day - even opening a window can help. Go for a walk or run, or do some exercise in your home. Try to keep to a regular routine of getting up and dressed and eating meals at the usual time, whether you are on your own or part of a family group. The structure will help, even if only a little.

You may find you have days when you have more energy and the grief isn't as consuming - this is normal. Some people can feel guilty when this happens, but there is no need. It is all a normal part of grieving. Equally if you are really struggling that is also normal. Please don't feel guilty or angry with yourself. You could also reach out to others who might also be finding it difficult, you may be able to help each other. Seek practical help from friends, family or neighbours.

How you can help another person

You might have friends or family that have been bereaved a long time ago or just today. And you may not know how to best help and support them.

At this time of uncertainty and fear many people may struggle more than usual, but you can help them just by being you. Being the friend, partner, colleague, son they love is all you need to be. Being present with someone in their grief is not easy, but is one of the best gifts you can give to someone you care about.

Stay in contact more – ask whether they prefer phone, text or video call. Let them talk about how they are feeling and about the person who has died – talking can be one of the most helpful things after someone dies. You can't take someone's grief away but you can make them feel less alone.

Useful contact numbers:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-the-bereaved>

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/coronavirus-supporting-children>

<https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus/>

<https://www.annafreud.org/coronavirus/>

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

<http://www.samaritans.org/>

<http://www.cruse.org.uk/>

