

# Coronavirus bereavement

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A Guide For Adults: Helping  
you manage bereavement  
and grief during the COVID-19  
outbreak



# Helping you manage bereavement and grief during the COVID-19 outbreak

## About this guide

This guide has been created in response to the extraordinary events and circumstances that are happening in the UK and around the world because of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) that are affecting how people grieve.

It has been created to help support you if a loved one has died because of coronavirus, or they have died during the resulting lockdown because of other reasons that also affect the ways that you can mourn and grieve.

Bereavement and grief are natural processes but despite this, they can be devastating experiences for some people, especially when the death was traumatic or happened in traumatic circumstances.

It is recognised that bereavement during the COVID-19 outbreak may be more distressing or traumatic for both of these reasons. This guide has been written because of this and to provide you with basic guidance and helpful links to services that can give you extra support when you may be cut off from your family, friends and usual support network that can give help and comfort at this time.

**Please note:** This guide has been created to reach as wide an audience as possible. Whilst some helpful specific links are included, it has not been possible to provide links for everyone's individual circumstances however some of the organisations listed may have further information to help you.

Remember – there is no right or wrong way to grieve and you can use this guide as much or as little as you need. You do not have to read it all but can use it a reference as, and when, you need it.

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# Section 1 - Practical information and guidance

## Why is COVID-19 (coronavirus) causing death?

You may have heard lots of things about COVID-19 (coronavirus), some that are helpful and some that are confusing. The correct term to describe it is that it is a novel-coronavirus. This means that it is a new virus. Scientists have identified many coronaviruses in the past 20 years but very few cause severe symptoms like SARS in 2002, MERS in 2012 and COVID-19 today. They are called coronaviruses because of the crown-like shape of the virus that can be seen under a microscope. Viruses are very small and usually responsible for things like colds and flu that usually only cause mild but annoying symptoms for most people. They cannot be treated with antibiotics.

The current coronavirus has been named COVID-19 and because it is new most people do not have an immunity to it. In serious cases, it is affecting vital organs in the body and the immune system that are crucial for life.

## How coronavirus affects how we care for the seriously ill

COVID-19 is a contagious disease, spreads very easily and because of this, the government has introduced severe social distancing and lockdown measures preventing you from having close contact with your loved one whilst they were ill, whether at home or in hospital. The emergency measures also apply to the people caring for your loved one and how care is given. Hospital staff will need to wear personal protective equipment (known as PPE) and your loved one may have been admitted to intensive care units that you may not have been allowed to visit. This can cause additional distress in an already distressing situation.

Normal expectations of how someone is cared for, and how you can remain in touch with them when they are seriously ill have been dramatically changed because of the infectiousness of coronavirus. This can increase the anxiety and distress that you would normally feel when someone is ill.

This can also be the case when people are admitted to hospital for other reasons. If your loved one has died because of other causes you may have experienced additional distress because of these changes.

## **How coronavirus affects bereavement and grief**

Bereavement due to coronavirus is likely to be experienced differently to bereavement after other illness because of the sudden nature of the disease, the traumatic circumstances that it has happened in, and because it took place during social isolation and quarantine restrictions, and changes to burial and funeral arrangements caused by this.

Opportunities that we have to prepare for someone's death can help us with the grieving process, and assist us later on. In contrast, coronavirus can cause sudden and traumatic death which may lead to increased feelings of shock, fear, panic, guilt and self-recrimination.

This is similar to the experiences of people bereaved by other kinds of sudden or traumatic death.

In these cases, there will be very little time to prepare for the death of your loved one or to say goodbye. You may not have seen them after they were admitted to hospital unless you were able to communicate via video call, and you will have been informed that they had sadly died by telephone.



This can feel very shocking and frightening and mean that potentially, your grief reactions will be more intense and distressing than if the death was anticipated and you had had time to prepare.

The coronavirus restrictions may also affect your grief if your loved one has died by other causes. This could be because of the effects of social isolation and quarantine restrictions before, and after they died. You may not have access to family, friends and community like before, and this can cause extra emotional and practical difficulties.

## **How Coronavirus is affecting what happens after someone dies**

### **Changes to burial and mourning rituals**

All cultures and societies have burial and mourning rituals after someone dies that help us to recognise our loss, say farewell to the deceased, commend them to the afterlife if that is our belief system, and celebrate and honour their lives. Faiths such as Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and some forms of Christianity have specific prescribed practices that happen before and after the death. These may have been affected by restrictions because of the virus and you may not have been able to carry them out as you would have done before. This can cause very real distress to you and your community.

Bereavement departments at hospitals and funeral directors also have had to change their practices and you may not have been able to see your loved one after they had died. Currently, attendance at funerals is being restricted to a very few people or in some cases, none, to prevent further spread of the disease to enable funerals to take place promptly.

## Registering deaths

How we register all deaths has been seriously affected by coronavirus restrictions, all death registrations will be completed by contacting the Registration Service by telephone and will no longer be done in person. To register a death you should telephone 0300 123 4045 and as long as the Registration Service have the required documentation, they will register the death on the telephone. The Registrar will also advise on the document necessary for the funeral and how to obtain additional death certificates. The Registrar will explain how to use the [Tell us once](#) service which will help you contact other government and local services to inform them about the death.

<https://www.gov.uk/after-a-death/organisations-you-need-to-contact-and-tell-us-once>

## Making practical arrangements after a death

Many practical arrangements need to be completed after someone dies that have also been affected by coronavirus restrictions. Help with these can be found here from Sue Ryder [Practical considerations after someone dies](#) or from the [Bereavement Advice Centre](#) Freephone 0800 634 9494.

[https://www.sueryder.org/practical-considerations-when-someone-dies?gclid=EAlalQobChMIj-qMg5Xe6AIV0eJ3Ch3mLQkKEAAYAiAAEqJ7AvD\\_BwE](https://www.sueryder.org/practical-considerations-when-someone-dies?gclid=EAlalQobChMIj-qMg5Xe6AIV0eJ3Ch3mLQkKEAAYAiAAEqJ7AvD_BwE)

<https://www.bereavementadvice.org>

Spiritual and Pastoral Chaplaincy care:

[East and North Herts](#)

<https://www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk/patient-visitors/chaplaincy/>

### [West Herts Hospital](#)

<http://www.westhertshospitals.nhs.uk/patientservices/spiritualpastoralcare/>

[LGBTQ- Queer funeral advice](#) is available from the Good Grief Trust

<https://www.thegoodgrieftrust.org/need-know-info/funerals/lgbtq-queer-funeral-guide/>

## **Making arrangements after bereavement by suicide**

Completing formalities and making arrangements after a bereavement can be difficult in any circumstances but in some, such as after suicide, it can be especially difficult and coronavirus restrictions are a cause for further difficulties.

Find help with this here: [Impacted by suicide during the coronavirus lockdown](#) and the government [Tell us once](#) service which can help you with contact with coroners' offices.

<https://supportaftersuicide.org.uk/impacted-by-suicide-during-a-the-coronavirus-lockdown-2020/>

<https://www.gov.uk/after-a-death/organisations-you-need-to-contact-and-tell-us-once>

## Making funeral arrangements

Planning a meaningful funeral during coronavirus lockdown can be challenging and you may not know the best way to do this. Finding other ways to celebrate and memorialise the life will be important for you and your family.

Help with [planning a meaningful funeral during coronavirus lockdown](#) is available from [Down to Earth](#), and Sudden has a helpful leaflet [Advice on memorialising](#) with further ideas such as:

- Creating a special place to remember them at home until you can identify a place outside to create a memorial, collect your loved one's ashes or visit the grave.
- Speaking with family and friends to plan how to do this
- Create an online memorial
- Create an online library of shared memories and photos of the deceased

<https://quakersocialaction.org.uk/we-can-help/helping-funerals/down-earth/information-and-guidance/coronavirus-organising-meaningful>

<https://quakersocialaction.org.uk/we-can-help/helping-funerals/down-earth>

<http://www.suddendeath.org/covid-19-bereavement/covid-19-advice-on-memorialising>

## Funeral help

Funeral costs can be hard to meet for many people and at the current time when many are experiencing unemployment and wage cuts, it can be much harder.

If you receive certain benefits you may be eligible for financial support for a funeral. You can find out more about this by visiting [Bereavement Support Payment - GOV.UK](#)

<https://www.gov.uk/bereavement-support-payment>

Quaker Social Action [Down to Earth](#) (tel: 020 8983 5055) is a charity who specialise in supporting people who struggle to pay funeral costs. Their guides [before a funeral takes place](#) and [if the funeral has already taken place](#) can be found in these links.

<https://quakersocialaction.org.uk/we-can-help/helping-funerals/down-earth>

<https://quakersocialaction.org.uk/we-can-help/helping-funerals/down-earth/uk-funeral-costs-helpline>

<https://quakersocialaction.org.uk/we-can-help/helping-funerals/down-earth/information-and-guidance/raising-money-toward-funeral-costs>

## **Help with other difficulties caused as a result of bereavement**

Personal circumstances before and after a bereavement can cause you additional difficulties at this time adding to practical things that need to be done after a death. You can find guidance here:

[Bereavement Advice](#) - free helpline 0800 634 9494 available Mon-Fri 9 am-4 pm

<https://www.bereavementadvice.org>

[Citizen's Advice](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk) - advice on benefits, housing, families, immigration and more [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

[Turn2Us](https://www.turn2us.org.uk) - coronavirus direct payment hardship grants and [Financial support after bereavement](https://www.turn2us.org.uk)

<https://www.turn2us.org.uk>

<https://www.turn2us.org.uk/Your-Situation/Bereaved>

[Help around death/practicalities](http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/help-around-a-death/practicalities.aspx) for parents or guardians of bereaved children under 18 from the Childhood Bereavement Network gives links to access bereaved parents and guardian financial allowances and other issues such as bereavement leave and work issues.

<http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/help-around-a-death/practicalities.aspx>

[Herts Directory](https://directory.hertfordshire.gov.uk) - directory of a wide range of services

<https://directory.hertfordshire.gov.uk>

[Herts Help](https://www.hertshelp.net/hertshelp.aspx) - directory of community organisation that can provide help

<https://www.hertshelp.net/hertshelp.aspx>

[Herts Sunflower](https://www.hertssunflower.org/Herts-Sunflower.aspx) provides a directory of support groups in Hertfordshire, including BAME groups

<https://www.hertssunflower.org/Herts-Sunflower.aspx>

[Herts LGBTQ+](#) directory of information and support groups for all ages (pdf)

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/about-the-council/data-and-information/equality-and-diversity/herts-lgbt-guide.pdf>

[North Herts Minority Ethnic Foundation](#) tel: 01462 440224

<http://www.nhmef.org.uk/pages/our-services/information-advice-guidance.php>

[GATE](#) - Advice support and networking for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities

<https://gateherts.org.uk>

## What to do with your loved one's possessions

Deciding what to do with someone's effects after they have died is always a painful and difficult process. Take as much time as you need to do this, decide what items you want to keep or give to family members as mementoes and which you no longer need to keep.

Before coronavirus lockdown families would often give useful but unwanted items to hospice or charity shops so that they could benefit. This is a vital source of income for them however, they will be closed for the length of the lockdown and unable to receive donations but will be happy to receive them as soon as they can. Amenity tips are also closed and this can make it difficult to clear out things that you may have considered taking there.

Overall, not being able to clear out these items may not have a big effect on your grief as it will give you time to think about what are the meaningful items that you want to keep.

If you need to begin the process of clearing out then consider ways that you can store the items out of sight temporarily such as in a garage or loft and ask friends or family to help you do this and then remove them once lockdown is lifted.

## **Further information about bereavement and grief after coronavirus**

Cruse Bereavement Care also has further useful advice and information on [dealing with bereavement and grief after coronavirus](https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/coronavirus-dealing-bereavement-and-grief).

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/coronavirus-dealing-bereavement-and-grief>

## **Section 2 - Helping you understand and manage your early grief**

### **Grief in the early days after a death**

Even though in some cases you may have been prepared for your loved one to die when this happens you can experience many reactions and feelings that are common in the early days of grief in any circumstances.

These reactions can be overwhelming, confusing and exhausting. They are likely to be very intense, causing emotional and, in some cases, physical pain, especially if their death was sudden.



They can include:

- Numbness and feeling of unreality
- Feeling paralysed and physically weak
- Feeling out of control with intense and overwhelming emotions that change rapidly
- Being unable to eat or sleep; being restless and agitated
- Difficulty thinking clearly and feeling disorientated
- Intense moments of 'experiencing' the presence of the deceased or 'hearing' their voice or wishing that you might
- Yearning for connection with the deceased or other family members who died earlier
- Feelings of regret and guilt or wanting things to have been different to how they were
- Intrusive memories and 'flashbacks'
- Confusion around whether it is usual to continue with everyday life, and allowing yourself periods of feeling ok

You may experience none, some, or all of these reactions, at different times in the early days and weeks after your loved one has died.

They will vary depending on a lot of factors including:

- your age
- the closeness of your relationship with the deceased and the role they played in your life
- the cause of the death
- whether the death was expected and / or sudden
- the traumatic circumstances of the death
- whether you witnessed the death or would have liked to have done but couldn't
- your own personality and previous bereavements or losses

- faith and spiritual beliefs
- cultural and ethnic beliefs
- Your support network
- Other things that may be happening in your life right now

Remember - all of these reactions are what others who have been bereaved have reported as common.

You may experience things differently and if this is the case, this does not mean that you are grieving wrongly. We are all unique.

## **Taking care of yourself in the early days after bereavement**

It is important to recognise the need for you, and others in your family to take extra care of yourselves and spend time with others in the early days after a bereavement because of the very intense, confusing and exhausting reactions that may be happening to you.

In many communities friends provide support to the bereaved by cooking meals, running errands and providing social and emotional support. Because of coronavirus restrictions, this will be difficult for them to do. Although it may be hard to find ways to do this, it is wise to accept help during this time and to keep in touch with others by telephone or online.

Getting plenty of rest, whether you can sleep when resting or not, keeping familiar routines and trying to do exercise, or fresh air breaks where possible, eating as well as you can and allowing yourself periods of distraction by reading, watching tv, listening to music, all help counter the exhaustion you will feel in the early days. This will help your body cope with the physical demands of grief and help fight off further illness or infection.

## The impact of isolation and lockdown on grief

If you are grieving alone you may find that many of your reactions and feelings are made more intense, and difficult to manage because of social isolation measures. You may have been advised to self-isolate because of medical conditions to protect you from the virus. This will disrupt the usual routines and social networks that can help in grief. Without finding ways to replace them, it may increase feelings of loneliness and deny you opportunities to share your feelings with others and receive support from them.

Because you will have been unable to have the usual funeral rituals and a chance to say goodbye, this may cause you to have more difficulty processing the finality of the death of your loved one. It can seem unreal for longer than it otherwise would, especially if you are still living in the home that you shared with them and their belongings continue to provide reminders of their presence.

[Cruse Bereavement Care](#) and [Sudden](#) have good tips on grieving in isolation and after Coronavirus. This advice is also helpful for all people grieving during these difficult times.

<https://www.suddendeath.org/covid-19-bereavement>

Your feelings and reactions will gradually change with time but having this kind of support during this time has been proven to be a big help in how you grieve later on.

## **Managing multiple bereavements or family illnesses**

Because coronavirus is very contagious and is affecting large numbers of people, sadly, you may be affected by the death of more than one person close to you, or find that you are affected by the news of the large number of deaths reported in the media. You and other family members may also have symptoms of coronavirus.

These things can have an effect on your grieving making your grief reactions more intense and prolonged and it is understandable if this is the case. Having the support of people close to you, friends and employers will be especially helpful to you. And if you don't have these, consider making contact with one of the organisations listed below who have trained people who can support you through this time.

## **Finding extra help and advice in the early days**

Finding supportive outlets to manage our grief during this time is important. Although tempting, using alcohol or other substances can delay grief and potentially prolong it.

## **Organisations that can offer help**

If you have no one to talk to, or you are finding it hard to talk with family and friends about your grief it is even more important that you find other ways to do this in the early days.

These organisations provide advice and helpline or chatline support for the bereaved.

- [Cruse Bereavement Care](https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/helpline) Helpline: 0808 808 1677,( Mon & Friday 9am-5pm- Tues, Weds, Thurs 9am-8pm)  
<https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/helpline>
- [Grief Chat](https://www.griefchat.co.uk) (Mon-Fri 9 am-9 pm) chat line support for death in any circumstances  
<https://www.griefchat.co.uk>
- [Sue Ryder Online Community](https://community.sueryder.org/?qclid=EAlaIqobChMI03Hxo7j6AIVZrR3Ch3Bsw9lEAAYASAAEgLuQfD_BwE) online community support for death in any circumstances  
[https://community.sueryder.org/?qclid=EAlaIqobChMI03Hxo7j6AIVZrR3Ch3Bsw9lEAAYASAAEgLuQfD\\_BwE](https://community.sueryder.org/?qclid=EAlaIqobChMI03Hxo7j6AIVZrR3Ch3Bsw9lEAAYASAAEgLuQfD_BwE)
- [A Loss bereavement support for men](https://www.ataloss.org/projects/Pages/bereavementsupportformen) telephone and group support for men- \*Please note-access via [Grief Chat](https://www.griefchat.co.uk) during coronavirus lockdown  
<https://www.ataloss.org/projects/Pages/bereavementsupportformen>  
  
<https://www.ataloss.org/Pages/live-chat>
- [Lullaby Trust](https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/bereavement-support/) – help after the sudden death of infant or baby  
Helpline: 0808 802 6868 or email [support@lullabytrust.org.uk](mailto:support@lullabytrust.org.uk) (7days a week)  
<https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/bereavement-support/>
- [Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide](https://uksobs.org) Helpline 0300 111 5065 (9 am-9 pm Monday-Friday some weekend coverage)  
<https://uksobs.org>

- [SANDS-Covid-19 updates](https://www.sands.org.uk/support-you/coronavirus-covid-19-updates/covid-19-and-changes-impact-bereaved-families) support for anyone affected by the death of a baby, bereaved parents, family members and healthcare staff. Helpline: 0808 164 3332 (Mon- Fri 9.30am-5.50pm, Tues & Thurs 5.30- 9.30pm)  
<https://www.sands.org.uk/support-you/coronavirus-covid-19-updates/covid-19-and-changes-impact-bereaved-families>
- [Rethink](https://www.rethink.org/help-in-your-area/services/advice-and-helplines/ncl-suicide-prevention-and-bereavement-support-service/) - support after suicide  
<https://www.rethink.org/help-in-your-area/services/advice-and-helplines/ncl-suicide-prevention-and-bereavement-support-service/>
- [Silverline](https://www.thesilverline.org.uk) is a 24/7 helpline providing information, friendship and advice to the over 50's  
<https://www.thesilverline.org.uk>

## LGBTQ+ issues during bereavement

As an LGBTQ+ individual you and your community may face additional difficulties during a bereavement because of your circumstances, lack of understanding and recognition by others and because of legal and financial systems or the family of a partner who has died does not accept their relationship. Because of this, your grief is often called the 'invisible loss'.

Several larger organisations, such as Cruse Bereavement Care and [Marie Curie](https://www.mariecurie.org.uk) provide dedicated support for LGBTQ+ people. There are also several specialist charities and helplines that provide support for all issues that affect the LGBT+ community, including bereavement and grief.

<https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/professionals/palliative-care-knowledge-zone/equality-diversity/lgbt-end-life>

[LGBTQ- Queer funeral advice](#) is available from the Good Grief Trust

<https://www.thegoodgrieftrust.org/need-know-info/funerals/lgbtq-queer-funeral-guide/>

[Herts LGBTQ+](#) directory of information and support groups for all ages (pdf)

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/about-the-council/data-and-information/equality-and-diversity/herts-lgbt-guide.pdf>

[Switchboard: LGBT+](#) A helpline for LGBT+ that takes calls 10am-10pm on any issue 365 days a year, including bereavement and grief. Helpline: 0300 330 0630

<https://switchboard.lgbt>

[London Friend](#) is an organisation that provides support and counselling for the LGBT community in London, on all issues, including bereavement and grief. Tel: 020 7833 1674

<https://londonfriend.org.uk>

## **Explaining the bereavement to adults with learning difficulties**

Explaining what has happened and the grieving process to adults with learning difficulties and involving them is important to help prevent unnecessary extra distress. Good advice can be found from MENCAP - [Supporting a bereaved adult with additional needs](#)

<https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/coronanxiety-support-resources/>

## Explaining the bereavement to children and knowing how to help them grieve

These organisations can provide help and advice about grief in the early days

### [Childhood Bereavement Network C-19 help](http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/help-around-a-death/covid-19.aspx)

<http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/help-around-a-death/covid-19.aspx>

### [Cruse Bereavement Care- help for parents](https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/for-parents)

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/for-parents>

### [Child Bereavement UK- Coronavirus](https://www.childbereavementuk.org/coronavirus-supporting-children)

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

### [Winston's Wish- Supporting Children with SEND after bereavement](https://www.winstonswish.org/supporting-children-with-send/) and [Death after a serious illness](https://www.winstonswish.org/serious-illness/)

<https://www.winstonswish.org/supporting-children-with-send/>

<https://www.winstonswish.org/serious-illness/>

See also 'When someone you love dies - a guide for children young people' and 'Coronavirus bereavement and children - a guide for parents and carers' both on this page:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/coronavirusbereavement>



## Bereavement and Dementia

Confusion and distress after a bereavement can be worse for people with additional conditions such as dementia. Help to support them during coronavirus can be found at [Dementia UK-coronavirus-covid19](https://www.dementiauk.org/get-support/coronavirus-covid-19/) and [Alzheimer's advice- coronavirus](https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/coronavirus).

<https://www.dementiauk.org/get-support/coronavirus-covid-19/>

<https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/coronavirus>

## Bereavement support at work

Grief affects all areas of our lives and can make continuing to do our jobs in the same way difficult for a while. Even though you may have been asked to work from home, been furloughed or continue to work, employers can be asked to support you through this time.

ACAS guidance to employers to support staff after a bereavement can help you know what they are advised about giving time off for funerals, length of bereavement leave and other entitlements. This can be found here [Time off for bereavement](https://www.acas.org.uk/time-off-for-bereavement). You could also ask your employer about the wellbeing support for employees, usually called Employee Assistance Plans (EAP) to access further counselling and support though not all organisations will have such a service in place.

<https://www.acas.org.uk/time-off-for-bereavement>

## Crisis help for adults

Sometimes the shock of the bereavement and grief can feel overwhelming. Crisis support to help talk is available at:

**GIVE US A SHOUT** 24/7 text SHOUT to 85258

<https://www.giveusashout.org>

**SAMARITANS** call 166 123 FREEPHONE 24/7 or email: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org) \* 24hr response time

<https://www.samaritans.org>

## Section 3 - Grief in the later weeks and months

Grief is a painful and emotional process of healing and adjustment that takes time and is not a one off event. It can be hard to remember this if you are faced with pressure to 'go back to normal'.

There is no hard and fast rule about how long grief lasts. During earlier centuries there were set grieving rituals that recognised that people may still be grieving of up to two years, however, it was recognised that the intensity of grief did not stay the same all the way through.

Grief is the way that we:

- come to accept the reality of what has happened
- mourn what we no longer have
- express thoughts and feelings about this
- begin to adapt and adjust to life without our loved one
- find ways to maintain meaningful memories and connections to them

This is not the same as forgetting about them, being able to sustain meaningful memories of them is part of healthy grief. This has been described as the way that 'our new life' grows around our grief.

## **The grieving process**

Many people have tried to describe the grieving process. They have talked about it as a journey, a whirlpool, described the patterns of emotions as waves that change in intensity or likened it to suddenly finding yourself walking in darkness without lights but gradually seeing new light as the process changes.

Some have said that in the beginning, it is as if their grief becomes them and is who they are but later new life gradually begins to grow around the grief. Eventually, the new life is bigger than the grief but they recognise that their grief will always be a part of us.

You will find your way to grieve that is right for you but it is important to realise that we grieve socially, as a community as well as an individual. Staying in touch with others who knew and loved your loved one will help your grief as you share emotions and memories and will help you feel less isolated.

## **Common grief reactions in later days**

After the sometimes intense and acute grief reactions of the early days, the changes in intensity and pattern of grief can be very welcome but no less difficult to manage and respond well to.

This can be a complex and complicated time as we question the meaning of life and death, how we will live life without our loved one and express emotions can become a vicious cycle of negativity and confusion. Common thoughts, emotions or reactions are:

- Guilt
- Regret
- Anger
- Yearning and longing
- Sorrow
- Relief
- Denial
- Loneliness
- Difficulties recalling positive memories
- Anxiety and over- vigilance
- Sleeping and concentration difficulties
- A lowered immune system, recurrent infections
- Acceptance

Gradually over time, for many people, these thoughts and feelings change and although we do not forget our loved one or their significance to us, they become less intense or occur less frequently. New life begins to grow around the grief.

Finding supportive outlets to manage our grief is important. Although tempting, using alcohol or other substances can delay grief and potentially prolong it.

Cruse Bereavement Care has helpful advice at [Restoring Hope](#) and Sudden Death - [Coping with grief after sudden bereavement](#) that explains the grieving process in more detail.

[https://www.cruse.org.uk/sites/default/files/default\\_images/pdf/Documents-and-fact-sheets/Restoring Hope Jul2017.pdf](https://www.cruse.org.uk/sites/default/files/default_images/pdf/Documents-and-fact-sheets/Restoring Hope Jul2017.pdf)

[https://www.suddendeath.org/assets/docs/sudden\\_coping\\_book.pdf](https://www.suddendeath.org/assets/docs/sudden_coping_book.pdf)

## When to get more help

You may feel that you would like more help to manage your grief. The organisations that can provide support are listed below and you can contact them at any point in your grieving, however, there are particular circumstances where getting extra support can be very beneficial.

- Prolonged reactions: If you find that your early grief reactions continue to be intense or cause ongoing difficulties with sleeping, eating, getting back to work, anxiety and panic, low mood or managing anger it would be a good idea to seek extra bereavement support or counselling.
- Social isolation: As time passes many people around you can appear to forget about your loss and it can become harder to talk to them about your loss. They may not know what to say and lack the expertise to help. Even though family and friends can help, if you feel isolated or have any of the difficulties above, this can also be the time to consider having extra help from bereavement support groups or counselling.
- Re-triggered grief: you may have been bereaved some time ago and the circumstances of coronavirus have re-triggered your grief causing intense emotions.

## Organisations that can help

These are some national organisations that can offer a range of online, telephone, befriending and more formal support during coronavirus restrictions:

- [Cruse Bereavement Care](https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/helpline) Helpline: 0808 808 1677, ( Mon & Friday 9am-5pm- Tues, Weds, Thurs 9am-8pm)  
<https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/helpline>
- [Grief Chat](https://www.griefchat.co.uk) (Mon-Fri 9 am-9 pm) chat line support for death in any circumstances  
<https://www.griefchat.co.uk>
- [Sue Ryder Online Community](https://community.sueryder.org/?gclid=EAlaIQobChMI03Hxo7j6AIVZrR3Ch3Bsw9lEAAAYASAAEqLuQfD_BwE) online community support for death in any circumstances  
[https://community.sueryder.org/?gclid=EAlaIQobChMI03Hxo7j6AIVZrR3Ch3Bsw9lEAAAYASAAEqLuQfD\\_BwE](https://community.sueryder.org/?gclid=EAlaIQobChMI03Hxo7j6AIVZrR3Ch3Bsw9lEAAAYASAAEqLuQfD_BwE)
- [Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide](https://uksobs.org/?doing_wp_cron=1587714038.9123280048370361328125) Helpline 0300 111 5065 (9 am-9 pm Monday-Friday some weekend coverage)  
[https://uksobs.org/?doing\\_wp\\_cron=1587714038.9123280048370361328125](https://uksobs.org/?doing_wp_cron=1587714038.9123280048370361328125)
- [Rethink](https://www.rethink.org/help-in-your-area/services/advice-and-helplines/ncl-suicide-prevention-and-bereavement-support-service/) - helpline support after suicide  
<https://www.rethink.org/help-in-your-area/services/advice-and-helplines/ncl-suicide-prevention-and-bereavement-support-service/>
- [Widowed and Young Foundation \(WAY\)](https://www.widowedandyoung.org.uk) peer to peer support for people under 50 after the death of a partner. Advice about [Bereavement](#). 24hr helpline support- members only. Online application form.  
<https://www.widowedandyoung.org.uk>  
<https://www.widowedandyoung.org.uk/bereavement-support/>

- [The Compassionate Friends](#) supporting parents and their family after a child dies at any age helpline 0345 123 2304 or email: [helpline@tcf.org.uk](mailto:helpline@tcf.org.uk)  
<https://www.tcf.org.uk>
- [SANDS-Covid-19 updates](#) support for anyone affected by the death of a baby, bereaved parents, family members and healthcare staff. Helpline: 0808 164 3332 (Mon- Frid 9.30am-5.50pm, Tues & Thurs 5.30- 9.30pm)  
<https://www.sands.org.uk/support-you/coronavirus-covid-19-updates/covid-19-and-changes-impact-bereaved-families>
- [Lullaby Trust](#) - help after the sudden death of infant or baby Helpline: 0808 802 6868 or email [support@lullabytrust.org.uk](mailto:support@lullabytrust.org.uk) (7days a week)  
<https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/bereavement-support/>
- [SWITCHBOARD LGBT+ Helpline](#) Helpline: 0300 330 0630 (10 am-10 pm daily) Phone, online and email support – for all issues affecting LGBT+ communities  
<https://switchboard.lgbt>

**Please note:** there are local bereavement and counselling services now offering their services online and over the telephone. You can find more information on these services on the [Health in Herts](#) web page.

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/health-in-herts/health-in-herts.aspx>

## Other forms of support

Bereavement support is not the only kind of support that can help you as you grieve. You can find support from your faith and religious communities, social activity groups and communities, private therapists and counsellors, recovery groups and friendship services. These are all valuable extra means of support that can be available to you even during coronavirus lockdown.

Looking after your general health and wellbeing as you grieve is important, taking time to exercise, relax and activities or hobbies that can allow the body and brain to have time out from grieving are important for your recovery and to help you have greater physical and emotional resources to support your grieving.

You can find more details about what is available in your area from:

[Herts Directory](https://directory.hertfordshire.gov.uk) - directory of a wide range of services  
<https://directory.hertfordshire.gov.uk>

[Herts Help](https://www.hertshelp.net/hertshelp.aspx) - directory of community organisation that can provide help  
<https://www.hertshelp.net/hertshelp.aspx>

[Herts Sunflower](https://www.hertssunflower.org/Herts-Sunflower.aspx) provides a directory of support groups in Hertfordshire, including BAME groups  
<https://www.hertssunflower.org/Herts-Sunflower.aspx>

[Herts LGBTQ+](https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/about-the-council/data-and-information/equality-and-diversity/herts-lgbt-guide.pdf) directory of information and support groups for all ages (pdf)  
<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/about-the-council/data-and-information/equality-and-diversity/herts-lgbt-guide.pdf>



[North Herts Minority Ethnic Foundation](http://www.nhmef.org.uk) tel: 01462 440224  
<http://www.nhmef.org.uk/pages/our-services/information-advice-guidance.php>

[GATE](https://gateherts.org.uk) - Advice support and networking for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities  
<https://gateherts.org.uk>

## Grieving as a family

Families change over the life course, some grow larger, some smaller. How we define family has changed but however you describe yours it is made up of individuals with unique personalities and often, different world views. How close you are geographically and emotionally will differ but all family members have a history of how they have responded to critical issues or life events in the past, collectively and individually.

Bereavement disrupts usual patterns of family functioning for a while and because each person had a different relationship to the deceased, and their own individual grieving styles this can cause difficulties and misunderstanding. Grieving styles among close family members can vary significantly too. It can be difficult for us to accommodate different grieving styles that are very different from our own and re-ignite family relationship difficulties.

Finding ways to accept your family patterns and adjust expectations about how others grieve can prevent you from distancing yourself from a potentially vital source of support and help you grieve together as a family.

## Supporting bereaved children

Families with young children need to be mindful of the ways that children grieve and how they can be supported to do this, and the particular challenges that coronavirus adds to this. Several national services can offer help for this (see below) and you can find the latest updates of new services at the [Childhood Bereavement Network](#)

- [Childhood Bereavement Network C-19 help](#)  
<http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/help-around-a-death/covid-19.aspx>
- [Cruse Bereavement Care- help for parents](#)  
<https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/for-parents>
- [Child Bereavement UK- Coronavirus](#)  
<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/coronavirus-supporting-children>
- [Winston's Wish - Supporting Children with SEND after bereavement](#) and [Death after a serious illness](#)  
  
<https://www.winstonswish.org/supporting-children-with-send/>  
  
<https://www.winstonswish.org/serious-illness/>

See also [When someone you love dies - a guide for children young people](#) and [Coronavirus bereavement and children - a guide for parents and carers](#)

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/coronavirusbereavement>

## Unrecognised grief

You may be reading this leaflet because your relationship to the deceased is not recognised or approved by family and the wider community, however, there are many situations where grief can go unrecognised, you may feel unable to express your grief or that your grief does not matter.

This is not the case - your grief does matter, because it matters to you. However, you may have greater difficulties grieving because:

- the person who died is an ex-partner
- you are male and find it hard to access traditional talking therapies
- you have a disability that affects access to traditional talking therapies
- you were not in a formally recognised relationship with them
- your family or community do not recognise your relationship or their importance to you
- you were a friend, not a family member
- you were a work colleague
- cultural and social assumptions about what your grief should be like
- you have an existing mental health difficulty and medication that affects your grief reaction
- you have to prioritise caring for others or finding financial support above your grief
- you are part of an ethnic minority community without appropriate cultural support

All of the organisations mentioned above in the 'Finding support to help you grieve' are experienced in supporting people with unrecognised grief and can help, however, it is helpful to them if you can say when you contact them what your relationship with the deceased was and anything that makes grieving difficult for you.

## **What to do if you are worried about your mental health**

Your bereavement is taking place in extraordinary circumstances. This, the way your loved one died can, and previous mental health difficulties can, in some cases, cause mental health difficulties as you grieve that require more specialist support, or cause you to have negative thoughts about your own life.

Advice and support are available online and by telephone from the organisations below but it is also important to make your GP aware of your difficulties:

**[SAMARITANS - If you're worried about your mental health during coronavirus outbreak](#)** if you are worried about your mental health during coronavirus outbreak.

**<https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/support-and-information/if-youre-having-difficult-time/if-youre-worried-about-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak/>**

Helpline: Call free on 116 123 (24 hours a day, 365 days a year).

**[MIND](#)** help and advice to help you understand mental health difficulties Support Helpline 0300 123 3393 Mon-Fri 9am – 6pm **[info@mind.org.uk](mailto:info@mind.org.uk)** and **[Elefriends](#)** online support community.

**<https://www.mind.org.uk>**

**<https://www.elefriends.org.uk>**

**SUPPORT LINE** - provides a confidential telephone helpline offering emotional support to any individual on any issue. Their opening hours vary so you need to ring them for details. Telephone: 01708 765200 E-mail: [info@supportline.org.uk](mailto:info@supportline.org.uk)

<https://www.supportline.org.uk>

**Papyrus UK**

<https://papyrus-uk.org>

Work with people under 35 who are having suicidal feelings. And with people who are worried about someone under 35. Helpline 0800 068 41 41 is open 10am – 10pm in the week. And between 2pm and 10pm at weekends and bank holidays. Email: [pat@papyrus-uk.org](mailto:pat@papyrus-uk.org) Text: 07786 209697

**CALM** - Campaign Against Living Miserably. Helpline: 0800 58 58 58 or live webchat (5 pm-midnight 365 days a year) Helps with support to prevent suicide, especially in men under 45. Also provides [bereavement support after suicide](#).

<https://www.thecalmzone.net/about-calm/what-is-calm/>

<https://www.thecalmzone.net/help/get-help/support-after-suicide/>

**ANXIETY UK** - Coronavirus support and free access the Headspace app Helpline: 03444 775 774 ( 7 days a week)

<https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/coronanxiety-support-resources/>

## Getting support locally for your mental health

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is impacting all our lives and social distancing and self-isolation can be really hard to deal with. It's normal to feel anxious, frustrated or bored, and if you're worried about the effect it will have on your mental health, you are not alone.

There are a number of local organisations offering mental health and wellbeing support. More information can be found on the happiness, wellbeing and mental health section of the [Health in Herts](#) web page.

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/health-in-herts/happiness-wellbeing-and-mental-health.aspx>

**Important:** If you are at immediate risk of harming yourself and your life is in danger please call 999

## Other guides in this series:

This guide is primarily to support bereaved adults during coronavirus lockdown but there are also separate guides for young people and parents/carers:

[‘When someone you love dies - a guide for children young people’](#)

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/coronavirusbereavement>

[‘Coronavirus bereavement and children - a guide for parents and carers’](#)

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/coronavirusbereavement>



Integrated Health and Care Commissioning Team,  
Hertfordshire County Council, [hertsjct@nhs.net](mailto:hertsjct@nhs.net)

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