

Guidance for adults who experience a bereavement during the Covid-19 pandemic

acorns

Your local children's hospice



Grief at any time is difficult and painful, and whilst Covid-19 can present additional challenges to the process, you will also experience all of the normal pain of loss and separation.

Acorns Family Services Teams offer bereavement support with warmth and kindness, being sensitive to these feelings and compassionate about your loss.

Currently, Acorns provides bereavement services to families whose children are referred to us prior to their death. This leaflet aims to provide helpful information for adults who have experienced a bereavement during the Covid-19 pandemic and, whilst our teams cannot offer you specific support, we hope you will find this information beneficial.

The death of someone close or a loved one can be a difficult emotional experience and one that may feel overwhelming. Following a bereavement, it is likely that you will experience a range of emotions as you grieve and start to adjust to life without that person.

If your bereavement is due to Covid-19, it is likely you will have been unprepared for the illness and your loss and may experience feelings of shock. It might therefore, take time for you to start to process and make sense of your experience and the reality of the death.

Sadly, measures that have been put in place to manage Covid-19 may have meant you were unable to visit your loved one in hospital or be with them during their end of life care. It is also possible that you and your family and friends will not have been able to hold the type of funeral that you would have wished for. Where this is the case, it might be helpful to think about alternate ways in which you can still say your goodbyes or to consider a separate memorial service when it is safe for people to gather again.

With households needing to self-isolate and socially distance due to Covid-19, it may be that you find yourself feeling alone with your grief and it can therefore be important to try to stay in touch and connected with relatives, friends and colleagues. Sometimes it can be helpful to make use of coping strategies that you have previously found beneficial during difficult periods like talking to friends or getting plenty of rest.

Managing your mental health and wellbeing is really important following bereavement and you will need to find ways of taking care of yourself that work for you. There is no right way to grieve and it is normal to find that others

around you may respond differently. Following a bereavement, it is also normal to find that your behaviour may change, and you could notice yourself feeling more tired, having difficulty concentrating or losing interest in some of your routines or usual activities.

It is essential to ensure that you allow yourself time to grieve and remember the person who has died. You may also need to think about when the right time will be to return to work.

We all need to be nurtured and to nurture others

N – No one chooses the pain and sadness that comes with seeing a loved one die, rather all of us want happiness and none of us wants suffering. We can recognise that all of us just find ourselves here in the flow of life, all of us are very temporary; all of us must come to terms with certain pain that we never chose¹.

U – Understanding and acknowledging that grief is a normal response to any loss is important. Grief is also a way of helping us heal. Grief is often portrayed as one feeling, but it includes a range of emotions and reactions which affect how we think and how we behave.

R – Reaching out for help and support can be difficult. You may find that you can cope by yourself or you may need the support of others. This can come from your family and friends, from other sources such as your local community or from health and social care professionals. Whilst you may appreciate some quiet time by yourself, it can be helpful to avoid totally withdrawing from others.

T – Talking to people about how you are feeling and thinking helps others to be compassionate and provide support. Members of the same family may respond to the same death in different ways so may use various coping strategies and need different support.

U – Understandably, due to the current restrictions coming together physically with friends and family may not be possible, therefore attending a funeral may only be available via virtual resources. Some may find this difficult, however sharing memories virtually can be a positive way of remembering loved ones.

R – Reflecting, thinking and reasoning, using our rational minds, looking at the evidence and bringing a balanced perspective can be especially challenging

¹Gilbert, P. (2015). *The compassionate mind: a new approach to life's challenges*. London: Robinson.

during a pandemic when many people and households are being told to self-isolate or socially distance from friends and family.

E – Experiencing various feelings and having different thoughts after the death of a loved one is normal. The social distancing measures required due to Covid-19 may also result in additional feelings and thoughts. Some people experience complicated grief which may leave the person who has been bereaved feeling stuck and struggling to cope with the emotional impact of their grief.

We hope you find this leaflet helpful, if you need more advice please see your GP or visit www.cruse.org.uk for additional support.

Remember your loved one

One way to remember a loved one can be through an Acorns Oak Leaf Tribute Fund – if you would like more information please visit www.acorns.org.uk/inmemory

