



ACTION AWARENESS EAST MIDLANDS
FOR ALL OF YOUR TRAINING NEEDS & ASSISTANCE



A guide to coping with bereavement

CONTENTS

Advice for the first few hours and days

- The First Few Days / Hours
- The Role of the coroner
- Inquests
- Funeral Directors
- Organ Donation

Handling Estates and Finances

- Costs you may need to consider
- The Role of the executor
- Funeral Expenses

Coping emotionally

- Coping with shock and grief
- Explaining bereavement to a child or vulnerable adults
- Dealing with anger and guilt

Moving on and how to embrace the future

- Moving On After Bereavement
- Supporting someone through bereavement

Useful Contacts

- Contact information

Contact Us:

28 Spencer Street, Oadby, Leicester, LE2, 4DP

actionawarenesseastmidlands@mail.com

0770011 1012

The first few days / hours

When someone dies, the first few hours and days can be emotionally overwhelming. Adjusting to someone no longer being in our lives can have a big impact on us, and dealing with the practical elements of bereavement can be especially difficult at this time. To try and ease this a little we have put together some practical advice on what to do, depending on the circumstances within the first few hours / days:

1. Confirm the Death

- If the person dies at home and it was expected (due to illness or palliative care):
 - Contact their GP or the healthcare team.
 - A doctor or healthcare professional will confirm the death and issue a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD).
- If the death was unexpected or the person wasn't under medical care:
 - Call 999 (or 111 for non-emergency advice).
 - Emergency services will determine whether a coroner or police involvement is required.

2. Notify Close Family and Friends

- Inform immediate family and close friends.
- Seek emotional support – you don't need to handle everything alone.

3. Contact a Funeral Director (*if ready*)

- A funeral director can help with the next steps, including transporting the body and starting funeral arrangements.
- If you haven't chosen a funeral director yet, there's no rush—take your time to find one you feel comfortable with.

4. Care for the Body (*if at home*)

- If the person died at home and you're waiting for a doctor or funeral director:
 - You can close their eyes and mouth gently.
 - Keep the room cool and place a sheet or blanket over them if desired.
 - There's no need to rush; you can spend time with them if you wish.

5. Gather Important Information

- Start locating key documents:
 - Birth certificate
 - Marriage certificate (if applicable)

- NHS number
- Will (if known)

6. Register the Death

- Once the MCCD is issued, you'll need to register the death at a local registry office within five days (eight days in Scotland).

Taking things one step at a time can help reduce stress during this difficult period.

The Role of the Coroner

A coroner is a judicial officer responsible for investigating certain types of deaths, primarily those that are sudden, unexplained, or have occurred under suspicious circumstances. Their role is to determine the cause of death and, if necessary, identify the deceased. Coroners are usually qualified medical practitioners or lawyers with specific training in this area.

When someone dies under unusual or unexplained circumstances, the coroner may open an inquest. This is an official investigation into the cause and circumstances of the death. It is not a criminal trial but rather an inquiry to establish facts. The coroner will examine all relevant evidence, including medical records, witness statements, and, in some cases, post-mortem (autopsy) reports.

The coroner's investigation is crucial in cases where the death may have resulted from an accident, suicide, homicide, or industrial exposure. They may also investigate deaths that occur during medical procedures or in custody, such as in prisons or police stations. If foul play is suspected, the coroner's role may overlap with that of law enforcement agencies.

If the cause of death is determined, the coroner may issue a verdict such as "natural causes," "accident," "suicide," or "misadventure." In some cases, a more specific cause may be given. The coroner may also decide that an inquest is unnecessary if the cause of death is already clear.

For families, the coroner's investigation can provide closure and clarity, particularly if there are uncertainties about the circumstances. Coroners also have the authority to make recommendations to prevent future deaths, such as improving safety measures in workplaces or public spaces.

Inquests

A coroner's inquest is an official investigation conducted by a coroner to determine the cause and circumstances of a death, particularly when the death is sudden, unexplained, or has occurred under suspicious conditions. Inquests are not criminal

trials but fact-finding inquiries designed to establish the circumstances surrounding the death.

Inquests are typically opened when someone dies in an accident, unexpectedly, or in situations where the cause of death is unclear, such as deaths in custody or due to medical procedures. They are often required if the cause of death is uncertain or if the death might involve issues of public safety, such as industrial accidents.

During an inquest, the coroner will gather evidence, which may include medical records, witness testimony, and autopsy results. They may also hear from experts, such as pathologists or police officers, depending on the case. The inquest is a public process, allowing interested parties, including family members, to attend.

The coroner's role is to establish the facts of the case, including the identity of the deceased, when and where the death occurred, and how it happened. They will not make a judgment of criminal responsibility. The inquest can conclude with a verdict such as "natural causes," "accident," "suicide," or "misadventure." In cases where negligence is identified, the coroner may make recommendations to prevent future deaths.

Overall, a coroner's inquest is an essential legal process for uncovering the truth behind unexplained or suspicious deaths and ensuring accountability where necessary.

Funeral Directors

A funeral director plays a key role in supporting families through the process of arranging and conducting funerals. Their primary responsibility is to manage all practical and logistical aspects of a funeral, ensuring that the wishes of the deceased and their family are respected. This includes the collection and care of the deceased, preparation for burial or cremation, and organising the funeral service. They also handle the necessary paperwork, such as registering the death and obtaining the appropriate permits.

Funeral directors provide guidance on funeral options, including the choice of coffin, floral arrangements, transportation, and music. They liaise with third parties such as cemeteries, crematoria, religious officiants, and humanist celebrants. On the day of the funeral, they ensure that the service runs smoothly and with dignity, managing the timing, transport, and order of service.

In the UK, funeral directors are not legally required to be licensed or regulated by a central authority. However, many choose to register with professional bodies that set industry standards and codes of practice. The main regulatory bodies include the **National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD)** and the **Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors (SAIF)**. These organisations provide training, support, and guidelines to ensure high standards of care and professionalism. Additionally, the **Competition and Markets Authority (CMA)** oversees pricing transparency and business practices within the funeral sector to protect consumers from unfair practices.

Funeral directors combine practical management with emotional support, helping families navigate a difficult and sensitive time.

Organ Donation: A Life-Saving Gift

Organ donation is the process of giving one's organs or tissues to someone in need, often to save lives or improve the quality of life of others. It can occur either through living donation or after death. Organs that can be donated include the heart, kidneys, liver, lungs, pancreas, and intestines, while tissues such as corneas, skin, and bone can also be donated.

The Importance of Organ Donation

Organ donation can save or dramatically improve the lives of individuals suffering from organ failure, such as those with kidney disease, heart failure, or liver disease.

Thousands of people are on transplant waiting lists, and an organ transplant can offer them a second chance at life.

The process is governed by strict ethical guidelines to ensure the donor's wishes (or their family's consent) are respected, and the process is conducted with transparency and fairness. Laws and protocols vary by country, but there is a general emphasis on voluntary donation, ensuring safety for both donor and recipient.

How to Become an Organ Donor

Individuals can register to become organ donors through their national or regional donor registry. Many choose to include their decision on their driver's license or ID. It's also vital to inform family members of one's wishes, as they may be asked to consent to organ donation after death.

Handling Estates & Finances

When someone dies there are several financial considerations to take into account. These can vary depending on the deceased's financial situation, estate, and any existing arrangements they may have had. Here are the key aspects to consider:

1. Funeral Costs

- The average funeral cost in the UK is between £3,500 and £5,000, depending on burial or cremation.
- Costs include:
 - Funeral director fees
 - Coffin, burial plot, or cremation costs
 - Service fees (church, celebrant, or officiant)
 - Transportation and flowers
- Check if the deceased had a **prepaid funeral plan** or **insurance** to cover costs.
- If money is tight, **government funeral expenses assistance** may be available through the **Funeral Expenses Payment** (if eligible for certain benefits).

2. Paying for Probate

- Probate is needed if the deceased had assets (property, savings, investments) that were solely in their name.
- The **probate fee** in England and Wales is:
 - £273 if the estate is over £5,000.
 - Free if under £5,000.
- Scotland and Northern Ireland have slightly different rules.
- Some estates may not require probate (e.g., joint assets that automatically transfer to the surviving owner).

3. Inheritance Tax (IHT)

- If the estate is worth **over £325,000**, inheritance tax may be due at **40%** on anything above that threshold.
- If the estate is passed to a spouse or civil partner, there is **no IHT**.
- The threshold can increase to **£500,000** if passing a home to direct descendants (children, grandchildren).
- Estates under these thresholds usually don't pay IHT, but **reporting to HMRC may still be required**.

4. Settling Debts

- Any debts (mortgages, loans, credit cards, bills) must be paid from the estate before any inheritance is distributed.
- If debts exceed assets, the estate is **insolvent**, and creditors are paid in a set order of priority.
- Family members **are not personally responsible** for the deceased's debts unless they were a **joint borrower**.

5. State Benefits & Pensions

- Check if the deceased was receiving:
 - State Pension
 - Benefits (e.g., Universal Credit, Pension Credit)
 - Workplace or private pensions
- Some benefits **may stop immediately**, while others (like pensions) may have survivor entitlements.
- The **Bereavement Support Payment** (£2,500–£3,500 lump sum plus monthly payments) may be available for spouses or civil partners.

6. Closing Bank Accounts & Financial Admin

- Contact banks, building societies, and utility companies to close or transfer accounts.
- Any **joint accounts** usually pass to the surviving account holder.
- Life insurance policies, shares, and savings may need to be claimed.

7. Property & Housing Considerations

- If the deceased owned property, it may need to be sold or transferred.
- If there was a **joint mortgage**, the surviving borrower may need to take over payments or refinance.
- If they rented, the lease needs to be terminated, and outstanding rent settled.

8. Legal Fees

- If you need legal advice (especially for probate, wills, or inheritance disputes), solicitor fees can vary.
- Simple probate applications can be done yourself, but for complex estates, hiring a solicitor may be necessary.

The Role of the Executor

As an executor of an estate, you are responsible for managing the legal and financial affairs of someone who has died. Your main duties include gathering assets, paying debts and taxes, and distributing the remaining estate to beneficiaries according to the will (or intestacy rules if there is no will).

Here's some things you will need to do in the process of being an executor:

1. Locate the Will

- Find the original will to confirm you are named as the executor.
- If there's no will, the estate will be distributed under intestacy rules.

2. Apply for Probate (if needed)

- Probate is the legal authority to deal with the estate.
- You'll need to apply for a **Grant of Probate** (or **Letters of Administration** if there's no will) through the **Probate Registry**.
- Probate may not be needed for small estates (under £5,000) or joint assets.

3. Value the Estate

- Create a detailed inventory of all assets and liabilities, including:
 - Bank accounts, property, investments, pensions
 - Debts (e.g., loans, utility bills)
 - Personal possessions (e.g., jewellery, cars)
- You may need professional valuations for property and high-value items.

4. Pay Debts and Taxes

- Use estate funds to pay off outstanding debts, including mortgages and loans.
- File an **Inheritance Tax (IHT)** return if the estate exceeds the threshold currently at £325,000.
- Pay any income tax or capital gains tax owed.

5. Distribute the Estate

- After debts and taxes are settled, distribute the remaining assets according to the will or intestacy rules.
- Prepare detailed records of all transactions and distributions.

6. Finalise the Estate

- Provide beneficiaries with a summary of the estate's handling.
- Keep records for future reference in case of disputes.

Acting as an executor carries legal responsibility, so seeking professional advice (e.g., from a solicitor) can be helpful and is certainly advised, especially for complex estates.

Funeral Expenses

Funeral expenses in the UK can vary widely depending on the type of service and location. The average cost of a funeral, including burial or cremation, typically ranges from **£3,000 to £5,000** at the time of writing. Costs include funeral director fees, the coffin, transportation, a ceremony (if desired), and burial or cremation fees. Additional expenses may arise from flowers, headstones, catering, and orders of service. A **direct cremation** (a no-service cremation) is a more affordable option, costing around **£1,000 to £2,000**.

For those struggling with funeral costs, financial support is available. If the person arranging the funeral receives certain benefits (e.g., Universal Credit, Income Support), they may be eligible for a **Funeral Expenses Payment** from the government. This covers some costs, including burial or cremation fees, but may not cover the full cost. The balance would need to be paid from the estate of the deceased or by the family.

A **Public Health Funeral** is arranged by the local authority when no one is able or willing to organise or pay for the funeral. Under the **Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984**, councils have a legal duty to arrange a basic cremation or burial. These are typically modest services without family involvement, and the local authority may try to recover costs from the deceased's estate if possible.

Public Health Funerals are dignified but minimal, usually covering transport, a simple coffin, and a short service. They ensure that everyone, regardless of financial situation, receives a respectful burial or cremation.

Coping Emotionally with Bereavement

Losing someone close to you is one of the most challenging experiences in life. Grief affects people in different ways, and there is no “right” or “wrong” way to grieve. However, understanding the emotional responses you may face and learning how to care for yourself during this difficult time can help you to cope and heal.

Shock

Shock is often the first reaction to hearing about a death, especially if it was sudden or unexpected. Even when the death was anticipated, the finality of it can still come as a shock.

Why Shock Happens

- When faced with traumatic news, the brain may struggle to process the reality of the situation.
- Shock acts as a defence mechanism, helping to protect you from the full emotional impact of the loss.
- Physical symptoms such as trembling, nausea, increased heart rate, and difficulty breathing are common.

How to Manage Shock

1. **Allow yourself to sit with the feeling** – You may feel disconnected or numb initially. This is normal and temporary.
 2. **Breathe and focus on grounding techniques** – Try to focus on steady breathing and notice physical sensations (e.g., your feet on the ground) to stay present.
 3. **Seek support** – Reach out to close friends, family members, or a counsellor. Talking to someone can help you process the shock.
 4. **Don't rush decisions** – Avoid making any major decisions while still in shock. Take time to absorb what has happened before acting.
-

Numbness

After the initial shock fades, you may experience a period of emotional numbness. This can feel strange or even worrying, but it is a natural part of the grieving process.

Why Numbness Happens

- Numbness is the mind's way of protecting you from overwhelming emotions.
- It allows you to function and handle practical tasks while adjusting to the loss.

How to Manage Numbness

1. **Don't judge yourself** – Feeling numb does not mean you didn't love or care about the person who died.
 2. **Engage with small, manageable tasks** – Focusing on daily routines can provide stability.
 3. **Allow feelings to surface naturally** – Emotions may come and go unpredictably. This is normal.
 4. **Connect with others** – Talking with someone about your feelings can help you reconnect emotionally.
-

Self-Care

Taking care of yourself is crucial when grieving, but it's easy to overlook your own needs during this time. Grief can be emotionally and physically draining, so self-care helps to support your overall wellbeing.

Why Self-Care Matters

- Grief affects both the mind and body.
- Physical and emotional exhaustion are common, so you need to rebuild your strength.

How to Practice Self-Care

1. **Rest and sleep** – Your sleep patterns may be disrupted, but try to establish a routine and rest when you can.
 2. **Eat and hydrate** – Even if you don't feel hungry, aim to eat small, nutritious meals.
 3. **Get fresh air and exercise** – Gentle activity like walking can help clear your mind and improve your mood.
 4. **Avoid excessive alcohol or drugs** – These may numb pain temporarily but can worsen emotional and physical health.
 5. **Be kind to yourself** – Accept that it's okay to feel sad, angry, or exhausted. You don't have to feel "normal" right away.
-

Denial

Denial is a common response to loss, especially in the early stages of grief. You may find yourself unable to believe the person is really gone or expect them to walk through the door at any moment.

Why Denial Happens

- Denial protects you from the full emotional impact of the loss.
- It allows you to process the reality of death gradually.

How to Manage Denial

1. **Acknowledge the reality gently** – It can help to look through photographs, visit the grave, or talk about the person.
 2. **Talk to others** – Sharing memories and discussing the person's death can help you come to terms with it.
 3. **Seek professional support if needed** – If denial persists for months and prevents you from functioning, a counsellor can help you process the loss.
 4. **Be patient with yourself** – Denial fades naturally over time as you adjust to life without the person.
-

Explaining the Situation to Children or Vulnerable Adults

Explaining death to children or vulnerable adults requires sensitivity and honesty. They may struggle to understand what has happened or feel frightened about the change.

How to Approach the Conversation

1. **Use clear and simple language** – Avoid euphemisms like “gone to sleep” or “passed away,” which can confuse young children.
2. **Answer questions honestly** – Be prepared for repeated questions as they try to understand the situation.
3. **Reassure them** – Let them know that it's okay to feel sad and that they are safe and supported.
4. **Encourage expression** – Children may express grief through play, art, or behaviour rather than words.
5. **Maintain routines** – Familiar routines help create a sense of security.

Example for a Child:

“Grandad has died, which means his body has stopped working and he won't be coming back. We will miss him, and it's okay to feel sad about that.”

Example for a Vulnerable Adult:

“Mum has died, which means we won't see her anymore. It's normal to feel sad or confused. I'm here for you if you want to talk.”

Dealing with Anger and Guilt

Anger and guilt are common but often misunderstood aspects of grief. You may feel angry at the person who died, at yourself, or at others involved. Guilt can stem from unresolved issues, regrets, or things left unsaid.

Why Anger and Guilt Happen

- Anger is a natural reaction to the sense of loss and injustice that death brings.
- Guilt arises when you replay past actions or decisions, wondering if you could have changed the outcome.

How to Manage Anger

1. **Acknowledge the anger** – It's okay to feel angry. Suppressing it may cause it to resurface later.
2. **Find a healthy outlet** – Exercise, writing, or talking to someone can help release pent-up anger.
3. **Avoid lashing out at others** – Try to separate feelings from actions. Taking a walk or counting to ten can help you calm down.
4. **Consider the cause** – Are you angry because of the loss itself, or at how events unfolded? Understanding the root cause can help you work through it.

How to Manage Guilt

1. **Challenge irrational thoughts** – Ask yourself: *"Would I judge someone else for this?"*
2. **Write a letter to the deceased** – Expressing your feelings and regrets can help you find closure.
3. **Forgive yourself** – Remember that you did the best you could with the knowledge and resources you had at the time.
4. **Seek support** – Talking to a counsellor can help you work through unresolved feelings.

Grief is a complex and deeply personal process. It unfolds differently for everyone, and there's no timetable for healing. Allow yourself to experience the full range of emotions without judgment. Seek support from family, friends, or a professional if you need it. Take care of your physical and emotional wellbeing, and remember that healing doesn't mean forgetting — it means learning to live with the loss in a way that honours the person's memory while moving forward with your own life.

Moving On After Bereavement: Building a Support Network and Finding Strength in Friends and Family

Losing someone close to you is life-altering, and the idea of “moving on” can feel overwhelming or even impossible. However, healing after bereavement is not about forgetting the person or erasing your grief — it’s about learning to live with the loss and finding a new sense of balance. Developing a strong support network and leaning on friends and family can help you navigate this difficult transition with greater strength and resilience.

1. Understanding What "Moving On" Means

Moving on does not mean forgetting the person you’ve lost. It means finding a way to honour their memory while continuing to live your life in a meaningful way. Grief is not something you “get over” — it’s something you integrate into your life over time.

What Moving On Looks Like:

- Feeling able to engage in daily activities without overwhelming sadness.
- Finding joy in life again without guilt.
- Being able to talk about the person who died without intense pain.
- Accepting that the loss is part of your story but not letting it define your future.

Taking Small Steps:

- Start by setting small, realistic goals, such as going for a walk, meeting a friend for coffee, or resuming a hobby.
 - Be patient with yourself — progress is not always linear, and setbacks are normal.
 - Acknowledge feelings as they arise rather than suppressing them.
-

2. Developing a Support Network

Grieving is a deeply personal process, but you don’t have to go through it alone. Building a strong support network provides emotional strength and practical help when you need it most.

Friends and Family:

- Reach out to people you trust – Some friends and family members may not know how to help unless you ask.
- Be honest about your needs – Let them know if you need company, practical support, or just someone to listen.

- Accept help when it's offered – Saying “yes” to help with meals, childcare, or errands can ease the pressure on you.

Support Groups:

- Consider joining a bereavement support group. Talking with others who have experienced similar losses can reduce feelings of isolation and provide valuable coping strategies.
- Local charities, hospices, and community centres often offer bereavement groups, either in person or online.

Professional Support:

- If you feel stuck in your grief or overwhelmed by emotions, seeking professional help from a counsellor or therapist can be beneficial.
 - Therapists can help you explore complex feelings such as guilt, anger, or regret in a safe, non-judgmental space.
-

3. The Importance of Friends and Family

Friends and family provide a crucial source of emotional and practical support during bereavement. They help you feel connected, valued, and less alone.

Emotional Support:

- Talking about the person you've lost with someone who knew them can help keep their memory alive.
- Sharing memories, stories, and even laughter can make the loss feel less painful over time.
- Family and friends can remind you that it's okay to experience joy and sadness at the same time.

Practical Support:

- Loved ones can help with daily tasks when you feel emotionally drained.
- Practical help, such as organising paperwork, cooking meals, or looking after children, reduces stress and allows you to focus on healing.

Social Connection:

- Staying socially connected helps combat feelings of loneliness and isolation.
 - Friends and family can encourage you to gradually re-engage with social activities when you feel ready.
 - Being surrounded by people who care about you reinforces that you are not alone in your grief.
-

Moving on after bereavement is not about forgetting the person you've lost — it's about carrying their memory with you as you rebuild your life. Developing a strong support network of friends, family, and possibly professional or community-based resources helps you to feel less isolated and more emotionally grounded. Accepting help, opening up about your feelings, and reconnecting with life at your own pace are essential steps toward healing. Over time, you'll find that it's possible to remember the person you've lost while also making space for new experiences and happiness.

Supporting Someone Through Bereavement

Helping someone through bereavement can feel daunting. You might worry about saying the wrong thing or not knowing how to provide comfort. However, offering support to someone who is grieving is not about having the perfect words — it's about being present and showing that you care. Grief is a deeply personal process, and everyone experiences it differently. Below is practical advice on how to support someone through bereavement with sensitivity and understanding.

1. Understanding Grief

Grief is not a single emotion — it's a complex process that includes sadness, anger, confusion, guilt, relief, and sometimes even numbness. While the grieving process varies from person to person, most people experience some or all of the following stages:

- **Shock and disbelief** – Difficulty accepting the reality of the loss.
- **Anger** – Feeling anger at the situation, the person who died, or even oneself.
- **Bargaining** – Trying to make sense of the loss and wondering if anything could have been done differently.
- **Depression** – Deep sadness and withdrawal from normal life.
- **Acceptance** – Gradually coming to terms with the loss and adjusting to life without the person.

Not everyone will go through these stages in a predictable order, and some may revisit stages over time. Understanding that grief is not linear helps you remain patient and supportive.

2. Be Present and Available

Offer Your Presence

Sometimes the most powerful thing you can do is simply be there. Sit with them, listen without interrupting, and allow them to express their feelings without fear of judgment.

- **Be patient with silence** – They may not want to talk right away. Your presence alone can be comforting.
- **Let them set the pace** – Follow their lead on how much or how little they want to share.
- **Avoid trying to "fix" things** – You cannot take away their pain, but you can help by listening and validating their emotions.

Check In Regularly

Grief doesn't end after the funeral. Weeks and months later, the person may still need support.

- Send a text or give them a call just to check in.
- Don't assume they'll reach out if they need help — they may be hesitant to bother you.
- Offer specific help (e.g., "Can I bring you dinner tonight?" rather than "Let me know if you need anything").

3. Listen Without Judgment

Grieving people often need to talk about the person they've lost — sometimes over and over again. Listening with patience and empathy is one of the most valuable ways to support them.

Active Listening Techniques:

- **Give them your full attention** – Put away your phone and make eye contact.
- **Use open body language** – Face them, nod, and maintain a relaxed posture.
- **Avoid interrupting or offering advice unless asked** – Let them lead the conversation.
- **Reflect back what you hear** – Say things like, "It sounds like you're feeling really overwhelmed."

What to Avoid:

- **Minimising their feelings** – Phrases like *"At least they lived a long life"* or *"You'll feel better soon"* can feel dismissive.
- **Comparing losses** – Saying *"I know how you feel"* can feel invalidating since everyone's grief is different.
- **Changing the subject** – Let them stay with difficult emotions without trying to distract them.

4. Offer Practical Support

Grief can make even small daily tasks feel overwhelming. Offering practical help can ease their burden and show that you care.

Examples of Practical Support:

- **Prepare meals** – Drop off ready-to-eat meals or help with grocery shopping.
- **Household chores** – Offer to clean, do laundry, or run errands.
- **Childcare and pet care** – Help look after children or pets so they can have time to grieve or rest.
- **Paperwork and admin** – Dealing with the legal and financial aspects of a death can be stressful. Offer to help with forms or phone calls if they are comfortable with it.

Be Specific When Offering Help:

Instead of saying *"Let me know if you need anything,"* say:

- *"Would you like me to walk the dog tomorrow?"*
- *"Can I pick up some groceries for you?"*
- *"Would you like me to come over and keep you company tonight?"*

Specific offers make it easier for them to accept help.

5. Respect Their Way of Grieving

Grief is personal — there's no "right" way to process it. Some people may want to talk openly, while others prefer privacy. Respect their choices and don't impose your expectations on how they should grieve.

Things to Keep in Mind:

- Some people may find comfort in rituals or faith; others may not.
- They may want to sort through the deceased's belongings right away or leave them untouched for a while.
- They may feel ready to socialise within a few weeks — or not for months.

Avoid These Common Pitfalls:

- **Pushing them to "move on"** – Grieving has no set timetable.
 - **Judging their emotional response** – Crying, anger, and even laughter are all valid reactions.
 - **Assuming you know what's best** – Let them lead the process.
-

6. Support Them Through Difficult Days

Anniversaries, birthdays, and holidays can trigger waves of grief long after the death. Offering extra support on these days can make a big difference.

How to Help:

- **Acknowledge the date** – A simple message like, "*Thinking of you today*" can be meaningful.
 - **Create new traditions if invited** – If the person is struggling with an empty holiday table, offer to spend time together in a way that honours their loss.
 - **Give them space if needed** – They may prefer quiet reflection rather than company on significant dates.
-

7. Help Them Deal with Anger and Guilt

It's common for grieving people to feel angry or guilty. They may be angry at the person who died, at doctors, at themselves, or even at life itself. They might also dwell on "what ifs" and things left unsaid.

How to Respond:

- **Acknowledge the feeling without judgment** – "It's completely understandable that you feel angry."
 - **Help them release anger healthily** – Encourage activities like exercise or creative outlets.
 - **Challenge guilt** – Remind them that they did the best they could with the knowledge and resources they had at the time.
 - **Avoid trying to "solve" their guilt** – They need to work through these feelings in their own time.
-

8. Encourage Professional Support if Needed

While most people process grief naturally over time, some may struggle to cope. Signs that professional support may be needed include:

- Prolonged depression or withdrawal from life.
- Self-destructive behaviour (e.g., substance abuse).
- Inability to perform daily tasks after a long period.
- Intense anger or guilt that doesn't fade.

Encourage them to speak to their GP or a mental health professional. You could offer to help them find a therapist or attend an appointment with them for support.

9. Take Care of Yourself

Supporting someone through grief can be emotionally draining. Make sure to protect your own mental health by:

- Setting boundaries — it's okay to step back if you feel overwhelmed.
- Seeking support — talk to someone you trust about your own feelings.
- Practicing self-care — rest, eat well, and engage in activities that help you recharge.

Supporting someone through bereavement is not about fixing their pain — it's about standing beside them through it. Listening without judgment, offering practical help, and respecting their unique grieving process will help them feel supported and less alone. Grief is not something that can be rushed or forced to resolve, but knowing that they have someone to lean on can make the journey through loss a little easier.

USEFUL CONTACTS & WEBSITES

Here are some useful contact numbers for support services:

The Samaritans: 116 123

Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide: 03001115065

If you care you share: +441913875661

Child Bereavement UK: 0800 02 888 40

UK Government Advice:

<https://www.gov.uk/after-a-death/bereavement-help-and-support>

Sue Ryder online bereavement support:

<https://www.sueryder.org/grief-support/online-bereavement-support/>

AtaLoss – Talk to a Grief Counsellor

<https://www.ataloss.org/live-chat>

Cruse Bereavement Support: 08088081677

Citizens Advice:

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/family/death-and-wills/dealing-with-the-financial-affairs-of-someone-who-has-died/>