

Nothing can adequately describe the heart-rending pain and depth of emotion we experience through bereavement. However, having awareness about what happens when we grieve can help us to cope.

This leaflet aims to provide information and offer some practical help to those who may be suffering loss right now and also for those who may be supporting someone who has been bereaved.

What is bereavement?

Bereavement can be described as our feeling of loss when someone dear to us dies. It causes a huge readjustment in our lives. Other changes in our lives such as redundancy, ill health, children growing up and leaving home, can also mean we have to readjust our lives and this can also create a significant sense of loss and grief.

Grief

Grief is the natural response to loss. It's a God-given process and tears can help us to release some of the pain we feel. When we lose someone close to us, there is a keen awareness of the huge hole left in our lives by their death, that no-one else can fill. We can feel we have lost part of ourselves.

Grieving is a mixture of deeply felt, heart aching emotions which come and go, often without any warning. The pain we feel can seem unbearable at times and we may wonder if it will ever end.

The Effects of bereavement and grief.

We can react physically with symptoms of stress which can include: rapid heart rate,

sweating, feeling sick, dizziness, tiredness, loss of appetite, aches and pains. It's also normal to feel confused and to have difficulty concentrating.

The process of grieving can be described in different ways. The following are some of the reactions one might have: Shock, Denial, Anger, Guilt, Fear, Sadness, and eventually, Acceptance.

A person may experience one emotion at a time although it's more likely that s/he will feel a jumble of emotions all at once.

Shock and Denial

These emotions tend to lessen the harshness of the immediate blow of death. Shock is usually the first response people feel especially if the death is sudden. Even if death was expected there is often a feeling of disbelief.

A person may feel numb - going through the motions of everyday life without feeling anything at all. They may seem to be coping almost as if nothing has happened and may feel unable to cry. In denial a person may fantasize that they have seen their loved one or expect them to walk through the door.

Anger and Guilt

Anger is a normal response to bereavement. It can be anger with the loved one for dying, or with the doctors, or you may be angry with yourself and feel guilty because " *I should/shouldn't have . . .* ". You may also feel angry with God for allowing so much pain and suffering and then guilty with yourself for feeling this way.

Acknowledging anger, especially in prayer, can be a helpful step in the healing process. God knows how you are feeling anyway and you can be honest with Him. You may find it helpful to talk it over with someone who will listen to you and be understanding. The CSN contact number and email address are at the end of this leaflet.

Fear and Sadness

Deep sadness is the underlying emotion of grief. It's normal to have feelings of helplessness and hopelessness and to fear the future. Depression can set in after the shock, numbness and anger have abated. Energy levels may be severely depleted and crying episodes may seem to continue endlessly.

Acceptance

Acknowledging the loss and allowing oneself to experience the painful emotions of bereavement can, in time, lead to an acceptance of life without the loved one. This does not mean forgetting but rather a gradual reorganisation as one begins to take on life again.

How long will grieving last?

The time scale varies for every individual. It could be weeks, months or years. As a rough guide, by the end of two years, the majority of bereaved will feel that they are beginning to readjust to their loss.

Ways of Coping with Bereavement

Talk about it with those who care about you and will listen. Express your sadness. Grief is a pain that may get in the way later if it is

ignored. You may wish to contact the CSN helpline.

For some people loss brings them closer to God. For others, it is a time of doubt, fear, and questioning. If you find it difficult to pray it can help to ask others to pray for you, for example through the CSN Prayer line.

Eat well and exercise. Try to maintain some sort of daily routine. Remember however, that grieving can be exhausting and it's important not to overdo things.

Be kind and gentle with yourself. Forgive yourself for the things you believe you should/shouldn't have said or done.

Let others be there for you. Sometimes we don't want to be a burden on others and we keep our grief hidden. This may prolong the process of grieving. It may also deny our brother/sister the opportunity of showing us how much they care.

Think about seeing your GP if your grief is so severe that you feel constantly anxious and depressed, or if you are unable to accept the loss even after a number of years.

Grieving is a painful process of readjustment. The way out of it is through it and as brothers and sisters in Christ it can be a privilege to help and be helped by one another on this journey.

“Hear my prayer, O LORD,
And give ear to my cry;
Do not be silent at my tears;
Psalm 39.12 NKJV

If you need someone to talk to (anonymously if you prefer) and in confidence – ring our national help line or email:

Phone: **0800 9545 099** email:
help@chsn.org.uk

If you would like brothers and sisters to pray for you or your family contact the CSN Prayer Line:

Phone: **0800 9545 099**
Email: prayerline@chsn.org.uk

Please see the CSN Prayer Line leaflet for more information.

For more information on CSN resources please contact:

Christadelphian Support Network Coordinator
Phil Cox
Admin 01555 705099
Email: Phil.cox@chsn.org.uk

BEREAVEMENT



Helping the Hurting. Encouraging Awareness.
Helpline & Prayerline: 0845 11 300 72