

## Bereavement advice

Bereavement can be a difficult subject to understand and discuss with a young person, as loss can create a range of emotional responses that your child may not be able to express or understand. The following document can offer some guidance and support on how to broach the difficult subject of grief and loss, along with some useful contact details of organisations that may be able to provide support and guidance over the telephone. Every young person is different and will respond to grief in a unique way. It is completely normal for parents and carers to find conversations about death difficult, and in these unprecedented times it is important that we continue to persist in doing the best that we can.

The information within this document was retrieved from the following sources:

- NHS Bereavement Helpline (GMMH Trust)
- Top tips for discussing loss with your young person (YoungMinds)
- My Grief Rights (Centre for Loss and Life Transition)

**NHS Bereavement Helpline 0800 2600 400**

The helpline is open 8am to 8pm every day.

- A new Bereavement Helpline is being introduced by the NHS to support bereaved families during the Coronavirus outbreak.
- The new helpline is not a counselling service but will be available initially to people across the North West to offer guidance and advice on dealing with grief and loss.
- The helpline will be staffed by NHS Blood and Transplant nurses who are highly skilled and experienced in working with bereaved people.

### **What is the purpose of the helpline?**

During the Coronavirus outbreak there has been an increase in bereaved families, as well as significant changes to palliative care and end of life services, which will affect all deaths, both Covid-19 and non Covid-19 related.

This is a bereavement helpline to offer guidance, support and advice to those dealing with loss at this difficult time.

### **What guidance and advice will the helpline offer?**

We will be listening carefully to each individual who calls to determine what level of support they need or can be directed towards. We are working with a number of charity partners who have offered their services for us to direct people towards. We will be signposting the callers to services ranging from the practical to specialist bereavement and psychological support. This is not

a counselling service.

### **Who can call the helpline?**

The number will be made available to families through the hospital trust that treated their relative. As this is a pilot scheme, the service will be initially introduced in the North West region.

### **Who is answering the calls?**

The service will be run by dedicated staff members from NHS Blood and Transplant who are highly trained in working with bereaved families. These are nurses who are unable to work on the frontline due to their own health or personal circumstances.

### **Are the staff trained to work with bereaved people?**

All the staff who will be answering the helpline have extensive backgrounds in working with bereaved families and have been given extra training for this role.

### **If someone calls from outside of the pilot region will they be offered support?**

Yes. No one who calls the helpline will be turned away. However, during the pilot it will only be hospitals in the North West who are proactively offering the number to families.

### **Which other charities / organisations will be involved in running this project?**

We are working closely with our charity partners and are very grateful for their support. The Samaritans are a key partner for our most vulnerable callers, and we are working with them to provide the best support for bereaved families.

Other organisations we are working with include Macmillan, Cruse Bereavement, the Good Grief Trust, National Bereavement Alliance, Quakers.

### **What role will these other charities / organisations play?**

Once it's been determined what level of support the caller requires, they will be signposted to the appropriate service or resource. The charity/ organisation will provide their usual guidance as necessary.

We are also asking the charity partners and organisations to provide some capacity to call back members of the public if needed, although we have had such a great response from nurses within NHS Blood and Transplant that we do not anticipate that this demand will be high and that we will be able to manage most of the calls ourselves.

### **Will you be offering support for NHS staff affected by Covid-19?**

The purpose of this helpline is to support recently bereaved members of the public. The NHS have launched a separate hotline which is available to NHS staff to support them during Covid-19



## Top Tips Discussing Loss with your Young Person

**Be open and honest with your child.** Explain, age-appropriately and using clear language, why the person died. We can find it difficult to say the words and have a tendency to use softer expressions such as 'gone away' or 'gone to sleep'. These expressions can be confusing for young children as they may believe loved ones will come back.

**Answer all the difficult questions** about death and loss even though it is likely to be painful and uncomfortable. It's okay to not have all of the answers, feel comfortable in saying you don't know. Be prepared for your child to continuously ask the same questions. Going over it again can help them to process their loss and gain reassurance.

**Listen to how your child is feeling.** If they blame themselves, reassure them that it's not their fault.

**Reassure your child** that you're always there for them, as they might be worried about being alone or feel abandoned.

**Don't be afraid to express your own emotions.** By showing grief you are encouraging your child to express theirs too. Spend as much time as possible helping your child to show their feelings openly – their sadness, anger and anxiety will come out over time and at unexpected times.

**Sometimes they 'forget'** and believe the person is still alive. This is normal in the first few weeks but can be a problem if it persists. If the problem persists – seek counselling support.

**Prepare your child for the changes** they may face. The death of a loved one can have a huge impact on the family's routine and structure. Ease any worries such as who will pick them up from school.

**Talk to your child about how they want to say goodbye.** Some alternatives could be lighting a candle, saying a prayer or poem, writing a letter, making a memory box, planting a shrub, visiting the grave or another special place (when possible).

**Help them make a memory box of photos,** films, drawings, some clothing, favourite perfume/aftershave and other significant items. This can be a huge source of comfort.

**Acknowledge upcoming anniversaries** and share ideas with your child about how you can commemorate these.

**Take care of yourself.** Allow yourself time and space to grieve for your own loss. The more you look after yourself, the better able you will be to support your child

**Give your child choice.** There is no "best" or "right" time to access support for young people who experience bereavement. You can make your child aware of the different support options that they can access and ask them what they would like to engage with. It is also important to reassure them that they can access support in their own time

**Seek professional advice** if you are worried and need support in helping the child through the mourning process. This might be the GP who might refer to CAMHS or bereavement counselling.

**Don't feel that you are on your own!** – There are lots of organisations that can provide support to families who have experienced a bereavement

(Information gathered from YoungMinds website: <https://youngminds.org.uk>)

# MY GRIEF RIGHTS

BY DR. ALAN D. WOLFELT

**Someone you love has died.** You are probably having many hurtful and scary thoughts and feelings right now. Those thoughts and feelings are called grief. Grief is a normal (though really hard) thing everyone goes through after someone they love has died.

These 10 rights will help you understand your grief and, over time, feel better about life again. Hang this poster somewhere you'll see it often. Re-reading it will help keep you on track as you move through your grief. You can also ask the grown-ups in your life to read the list so they'll remember to help you in the best ways they can.



1

**I have the right to have my own feelings about the death.** I might feel mad, sad, or lonely. I might feel scared or relieved. I might feel numb or sometimes not anything at all. No one will feel exactly like I do.

2

**I have the right to talk about my grief whenever I feel like it.** When I need to talk, I will find someone who will listen to me and love me. When I don't want to talk about it, that's OK, too.

3

**I have the right to show my feelings of grief in my own way.** Some grieving kids like to play so they'll feel better for a while. I can play or laugh, too. I might also get mad and do angry things. This doesn't mean I'm bad. It just means I have scary feelings that I need help with.

4

**I have the right to need other people to help me with my grief, especially grown-ups who care about me.** Mostly I need them to pay attention to what I'm feeling and saying and to love me no matter what.

5

**I have the right to get upset about little things.** I might feel grumpy and have trouble getting along with others sometimes.

6

**I have the right to have "griefbursts." Griefbursts are sudden feelings of sadness that just hit me sometimes—even a long time after the death.** Griefbursts can be really strong and even scary. When they happen, I might need to ask someone for help.

7

**I have the right to use my beliefs about God to help me with my feelings of grief.** Praying might make me feel better and somehow closer to the person who died.

8

**I have the right to try to understand why the person I love died.** But it's OK if I don't find an answer. "Why?" questions about life and death are the hardest questions in the world.

9

**I have the right to remember the person who died.** I can also talk about my memories. Sometimes those memories will be happy, and sometimes they might be sad. Either way, remembering helps me.

10

**I have the right to grieve and, over time, to heal.** I'll go on to live a happy life, and the life and death of the person I miss will always be a part of me.

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Center for Loss  
& Life Transition®  
www.centerforloss.com

(Information gathered from Centre for loss and Life Transition, website:  
<https://www.centerforloss.com>)

## Where else can you access support for yourself or your young person?

### Grief Encounter

- Helping children through bereavement. Support services range from a supportive voice at the end of a phone, family Fundays, Grief Groups and Remembrance Days, to long-term one-to-one counselling.
- Phone: 020 8371 8455 (weekdays, office hours)
- Email: [contact@griefencounter.org.uk](mailto:contact@griefencounter.org.uk)

### Child Bereavement UK

- Supports families and educates professionals when a baby or child of any age dies or is dying, or when a child is facing bereavement.
- Helpline: 0800 0288 840 (Mon-Fri 09:00-17:00)
- Email: [support@childbereavementuk.org](mailto:support@childbereavementuk.org)

### Winston Wish

- Offering practical support and guidance to bereaved children, their families and professionals.
- Freephone Helpline: 08088 020 021 (Mon - Fri 09:00 – 17:00)
- Email their ASK email service for free advice and support following a bereavement:
- [askmailbox@winstonswish.org.uk](mailto:askmailbox@winstonswish.org.uk)

### Child Bereavement Network

- Search facility via postcode to find details of its member organisations that support bereaved children, whatever the cause of death. Families can refer themselves directly to these free services, and other children's professionals (teachers, GPs etc) can get information, guidance and support too.
- Email: [cbn@ncb.org.uk](mailto:cbn@ncb.org.uk)

### The Compassionate Friends

- Supporting bereaved parents and their families after a child dies. Calls are answered by parents, siblings and grandparents who have suffered the death of a child.
- Helpline: 0345 123 2304 (every day 10am – 4pm & 7pm – 10pm)
- Email: [helpline@tcf.org.uk](mailto:helpline@tcf.org.uk)

### Child Death Helpline

- For anyone affected by the death of a child of any age.
- Freephone: 0800 282 986 or 0808 800 6019 if calling from a mobile (Mon to Fri 10:00-13:00, Tue & Wed 13:00-16:00 and every evening 19.00-22.00)
- Email: [contact@childdeathhelpline.org](mailto:contact@childdeathhelpline.org)

A decorative graphic in the top left corner consisting of several overlapping leaf-like shapes in shades of blue and teal.

### Greater Manchester Bereavement Service

- If you've been bereaved and need support or advice, call the Greater Manchester Bereavement Service on 0161 983 0902 or visit [www.greater-manchester-bereavement-service.org.uk](http://www.greater-manchester-bereavement-service.org.uk)
- Support is available to all those in Greater Manchester, bereaved or affected by a death.
- 0161 983 0902 or visit [www.greater-manchester-bereavement-service.org.uk](http://www.greater-manchester-bereavement-service.org.uk)

### Minds Matter

- Mental Wellbeing Practitioners, Peer Support Workers and Counsellors who can help you to manage and overcome your difficulties via; counselling, one-to-one support, groups, drop-in support and coaching.
- 0161 343 5748 or visit <https://www.thebiglifegroup.com/service/mindsmatter/>

Whilst CAMHS is not a specialist bereavement counselling service, bereavement and loss can have a significant impact on mental health and well-being. We would be happy to have conversations about this if desired, to see if there is any assistance which we could offer, and/or signpost to the appropriate services if CAMHS is not deemed as appropriate.