

## WHAT IS BEREAVEMENT?

It means being deprived by death. Grieving is not a weakness, it is a necessity.

People are unprepared for the intensity of their emotions or the swiftness with which moods change.

These are normal and common reactions to a loss.

Grief takes time, like the healing of a away, but we learn to 'live around it'.

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# COPING WITH BEREAVEMENT

Bereavement is a major life crisis. The loss of someone close is life's most stressful event

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## GUIDELINES FOR BEREAVEMENT

### 1. **Accept your emotions**

Death hurts. It is difficult to realize that in our lifetime we will never see or touch our loved one again. Many people find that they are on an emotional roller coaster, experiencing grief, guilt, panic and anger.

### 2. **Express your feelings**

Refusal to let ourselves experience and communicate our distress may prolong the agony and delay the grief process. It helps to have people in your life to which you do not have to say "I'm fine" when you are asked how you're doing. It may also help to write down your feelings.

### 3. **Don't expect miracles overnight**

Allow adequate time for the grieving process to run its course. Remember that grieving is never the same for any two people. Your own way of healing will be uniquely yours. You do not have to pretend to have recovered.

### 4. **Bring your children into the grieving process**

The work of grief should involve the children. Just like adults, they too are grieving and need to share in the task of bereavement. Silence and secrecy around our children deny them opportunities they need for healing. Be careful that your children don't lose two people in the death the person who died and the parent who is so overwhelmed by the loss that they are unable to help meet their children's needs.

### 5. **Escaping into loneliness is the wrong solution**

Staying alone too much can lead to the home becoming a fortress. Day-to-day challenges are

avoided. It helps to leave the house for simple and routine chores that do not demand too much complex decision-making. Don't overdo it but realize there comes a time to try to take some steps back to normal, or a new normal

### 6. **Friends Are important**

Talk to a friend. Friends can help if they are allowed to enter into your grief. Holiday and special occasions can be very, very difficult. Plan ahead to be with those who care and want to help.

### 7. **Help yourself and others through support groups**

Friends may be uncomfortable talking about the death of your loved one with you. You may sense their uneasiness. Self-help groups are often successful because you know that there are those who understand and who have gone through what you are experiencing.

### 8. **Counselling may be beneficial**

There is nothing to be ashamed of in seeking help from your clergy or a mental health professional. Doing this is not a sign of weakness, but rather of your determination to help yourself

### 9. **You have to be nice to yourself**

This includes those activities that are refreshing and relaxing. Many find quiet moments of solitude helpful such as walking, reading a book or taking a leisurely bath. For many, religion or spiritual faith give them the strength to endure and the wisdom to know how to cope.

### 10. **Try to turn your pain into a positive experience**

Through the death of a loved one, survivors have come to appreciate the gift of life, started living for today and grown in kindness, caring and understanding.

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*People cope with their grief in different ways. Some grieve openly, others privately. It is not always evident someone is grieving.*

*Nevertheless, grief needs to be expressed or processed so the person can heal. If not, other symptoms may appear and affect our health and/or behaviour.*

