WHAT IS GRIEF?

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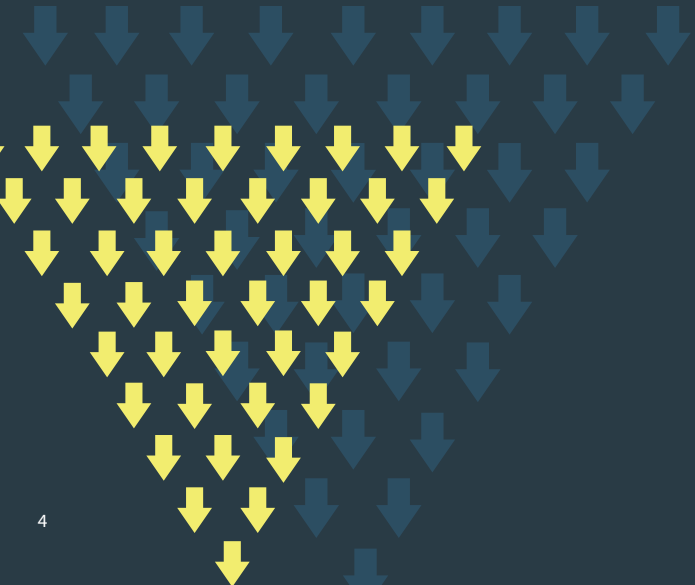
Grief - the normal process of reacting to a loss

Bereavement - the period after a loss when grief is felt and mourning occurs

Mourning - the process of adapting to a loss.

Grief is the feeling we experience when we lose something important to us. We can experience grief after losses such as a pet dying, an unexpected job loss, family breakdown or major life-changing events or illnesses.



For most people, their main experiences of grief will be after the death of someone they love.

Experiences of grief, bereavement and mourning vary greatly from person to person, and can be influenced by our faith, culture, the nature of the loss and the time we have spent anticipating it.

Whatever the cause, grief can be experienced in many ways, and there is no right or wrong way to feel. The process of grieving is not fixed either and feelings of acute grief can last for many months or years. Even when we feel we have grieved, events and memories can trigger these feelings again.

Signs & symptoms

Grief can affect us in many different ways:

EMOTIONALLY

Anger, sadness, guilt, anxiety, despair, shock, resentment

SOCIALLY

Withdrawal , changes in attitude and relationships out of character behaviour

MENTALLY

Feeling distracted and restless, memory problems, over-worrying about others

PHYSICALLY

Sleeping problems, changes in appetite, illness, lack of energy, aches and pains

Why do we grieve?

Grieving is the process that allows us to come to terms with loss. If we do not allow ourselves to feel grief and express all the emotions that go along with it we may affect our mental health and end up:

- Blaming ourselves
- Feeling depressed
- Feeling anxious
- Self-medicating with food, alcohol or drugs
- Feeling intense and overwhelming grief when it's not appropriate or safe.

Coping with grief

Cultures across the world have varied rituals and traditions around grieving after the death of a loved one, most of which help us say goodbye and come together to share feelings. Participating in these traditions might make feelings more intense, but expressing them can help with moving through the process of grieving.

If you are struggling to cope there are organisations that can help listed on the next few pages.

If your feelings become overwhelming, please contact your GP or see the back cover of this booklet for emergency numbers.

We have included some faith-specific perspectives on grief further on in this booklet.

There are organisations you can talk to about your feelings, whilst staying within your faith community. We have listed the key organisations you can get support from on the following pages, and you can find more in our **faith booklets**. Please go to the resources section of the cass website - **www.cassbristol.org/download-category/faith-toolkits/** to download a free copy. If you would like us to send you a paper version you can email **info@cassbristol.org** or call **0117 304 1400** to leave a message.

At A Loss: online resources, including one specifically for men and young people, signposting to other bereavement services. Online chat to a counsellor, Monday to Friday, 9am-9pm **www.ataloss.org/live-chat**

Bristol MindLine: Confidential helpline for people in distress. Call **0808 808 0330** free, all week from 7pm - 11pm

Bereavement Advice Centre: practical information about what to do following a death, and resources around grief. Freephone helpline open Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm **0800 634 9494**. **www.bereavementadvice.org/**

Cruse Bereavement Care: Online resources, and a free helpline (Monday to Friday 9.30-5pm (excluding bank holidays), 8pm pm on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays). Call **0808 808 1677** or email **helpline@cruse.org.uk**. The Bristol office can be contacted on **0117 926 4045** or **bristol@cruse.org.uk** **www.cruse.org.uk**

The Harbour: Counselling for people facing death, or who have been bereaved. Call 0117 925 9348 or use the contact form at **www.the-harbour.org.uk**

Hope Again: Online resources and case studies for young people, with advice for parents. Email **hopeagain@cruse.org.uk** and see **www.hopeagain.org.uk**

Grief & Buddhism

There are many private counsellors who are Buddhist and can offer this perspective on grief, however very few organisations do.

Trying to live with mindful awareness and accepting impermanence are key elements of Buddhism. So, Buddhists experiencing loss and grief are encouraged to open up these emotions- to neither deny them nor to distract themselves- whilst also accepting that death is unavoidable for us all. There is guidance to appreciate the preciousness of each extra day lived, with the inevitability of death as part of this.

“The glorious chariots of kings wear out, and the body wears out and grows old; but the virtue of the good never grows old.”
The Buddha in The Dhammapada

Grief & Christianity

There are a number of national organisations who specialise in supporting Christian communities, they are listed in our Christianity faith booklet. Individual counsellor details are collated by ACC and can be found online on their website **www.acc-uk.org**

Vine Counselling: counselling with a Christian ethos, based in North Somerset **01934 876377 www.vinecounselling.org vine.counselling@hotmail.co.uk**

Grief & Hinduism

There are many private counsellors who are Hindu and can offer this perspective on grief, however very few organisations do.

Regular meditation is advocated at any time, and can help with reflecting on grief and bereavement. Specific rituals after someone dies are often viewed as the way to mourn someone and accept the loss. These can continue for up to one year after a person's death.

"As a person casts off worn-out clothes and puts on new ones, so does the atman cast off worn- out bodies enter new ones. "
From the Bhagavad Gita

Grief & Islam

There are a number of national organisations who specialise in supporting Muslim communities, they are listed in our Islam faith booklet. Individual Muslim counsellor details are collated by MCAPN and can be found online on their website **www.mcapn.co.uk**

Muslim Bereavement Support Service: advice and phone support for bereaved women from an Islamic perspective
020 3468 7333 info@mbss.org.uk
www.mbss.org.uk

Grief & Judaism

There are a number of national organisations who specialise in supporting Jewish communities, they are listed in our Judaism faith booklet.

Chabad: information on grief and death for Jewish people
www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/266275/jewish/Death-Mourning.htm

Jewish Bereavement Counselling Service:
0208 951 3881 | enquiries@jbcs.org.uk
www.jbcs.org.uk

Grief & Sikhism

The Sikh Helpline: online resources and a free helpline available 24/7
0845 644 0704 www.sikhhelpline.com

Sikh Your Mind: online mental health resources for the Sikh community
www.sikhyourmind.com/

Upon losing a loved one, it may be comforting to reflect on the transience of life and to remember that we are simply guests in this world. It may also help to reflect on concepts of humility, acceptance, and graciousness. These ideas are exemplified throughout the Sikh scripture, including in this prayer from Guru Ramdas: "O Divine, you are the True Creator and my Divine Master. Whatever you please is what comes to pass, and whatever you give is what I receive."
Simran Jeet Singh "Sikh ways of grieving"

Covid-19

The 2020 Covid-19 pandemic is not only causing huge loss of life, but may have long-term mental health implications, such as an increase in conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder in health professionals who are faced with death every day. It is also affecting how we grieve for those we have lost.

For many people of faith, those of a particular faith or none, funeral and burial traditions are having to be changed, and numbers of people attending funerals and burials are limited.

CASS have put together a directory where you can find links to information on mental health support, and also what changes to expect after bereavement and advice from faith-based organisations.

You can find the directory via this web page: **www.cassbristol.org/covid19-directory/**

The need for social distancing and self-isolation is also affecting how we grieve for loved ones. Some ways you can help yourself include:

- Stay in touch with friends and family with texts, phone or video calls. Or see our CASS directory or the organisations in this booklet for helplines you can call
- Make sure you look after yourself by eating, sleeping and getting fresh air and exercise if you are able to
- Ask for help if you need to, from family, friends or neighbours, or see the CASS directory for local organisation that can offer mental health support and practical assistance.

Local support

Bristol Mental Health
www.bristolmentalhealth.org

Improving Access to Psychological Therapies - VitaMinds, part of Vita Health
0333 200 1893 | refer.BNSSG@nhs.net

Bristol City Council Mental Health Links
www.bristol.gov.uk/social-care-health/mental-health-services

Samaritans
call 0117 983 1000 or text 07725 90 90 90

Community Access Support Service (CASS)
Works with community, equality and faith groups to improve access to mental health support.
0117 304 1400 | info@cassbristol.org
www.cassbristol.org

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community access support service