

Supporting a bereaved family

The word 'family' means different things to different people and can include not only relatives but friends, neighbours, and any others who were important to the person too.

Each person may grieve differently and cope with a death in varying ways. This will depend on:

- their relationship with the deceased
- the nature of the death
- their belief systems
- their values
- their cultural influences in dealing with loss
- as well as their usual coping styles

You may experience a whole range of emotions displayed by family members after a death. It can still be a shock even if the death was expected. Sadness, anger, frustration, yearning, despair and anxiety are all common emotions in grief.

Knowing what to say

Life immediately after a bereavement can be filled with many tasks and practical things for families to do and arrange. Depending on how people cope they may prefer the distraction of keeping busy. For those who may be feeling overwhelmed by their grief they may find it extremely difficult to do the things they need to.

In the immediate time after a death there is often a lot of support offered from family and friends, whether they be visiting and keeping in touch more, or offering practical support like making meals and offering to help with daily tasks. This inevitably will lessen as time goes on.

It can be common for family members to start to feel their grief more acutely when the funeral is over and they are getting back to more usual routines.

It can be difficult to know the right thing to say to someone who is bereaved. Sometimes we don't have the right words and that is ok.

The main thing is to allow people to talk about their experience in a way that acknowledges their loss, but without trying to fix it or make it better.

It can be a natural response to want to try and make the person feel better, to try and point out the positives or share our own experience. Sometimes people will use clichés to do this like...



It can be much more helpful to say, 'I can't imagine how you must be feeling' or 'I am not sure what to say but I am here'.

Sometimes grieving people need to talk about the death and what has happened and they may need to do this multiple times.

Signposting and information

It might be useful to be aware of local services, groups or support available for bereaved families in your area. This could be helpful to share with bereaved families so that they know what is available to them should they need to access more support.

St Giles Hospice Bereavement Help Points - These help points provide information on coping with both the practical and emotional aspects of losing a relative or friend, a chance to chat over a cup of tea with one of our support volunteers and perhaps meet others in a similar situation.

For further information please visit our website:

[Bereavement Support For Adults | Bereavement Help | St Giles Hospice](#)

National Services

Cruse Bereavement Support – Cruse.org.uk – **National Helpline 08088081677**

Child Bereavement UK – childbereavementuk.org – **National Helpline 08000288840**

Winston's Wish - giving hope to grieving children (winstonswish.org) – **National Helpline 08088020021**

Making arrangements for the funeral

This can involve many decisions for families and these can feel difficult if the person who has died hasn't shared their wishes. It can leave worries for some that they have chosen the right things. They may appreciate some clear information about what to expect and the processes that have to be followed.

What to do when someone dies: step by step - [GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://GOV.UK)

Register a death - [GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://GOV.UK)

What to do after a death - [Citizens Advice](#)