

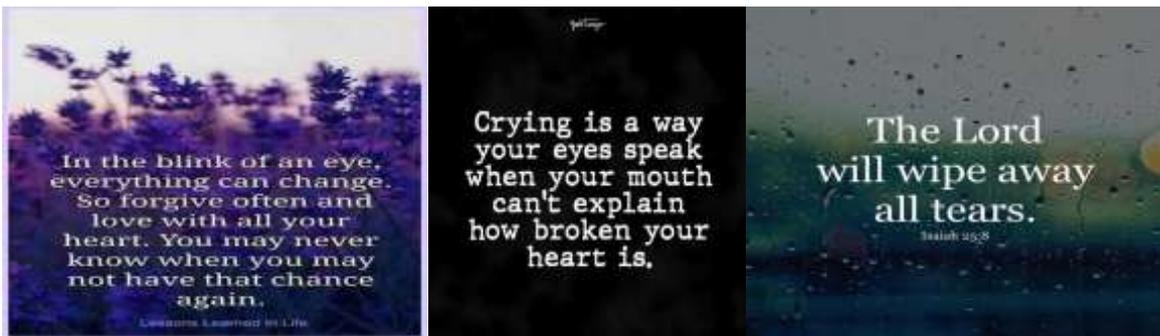


A safe space to talk and listen

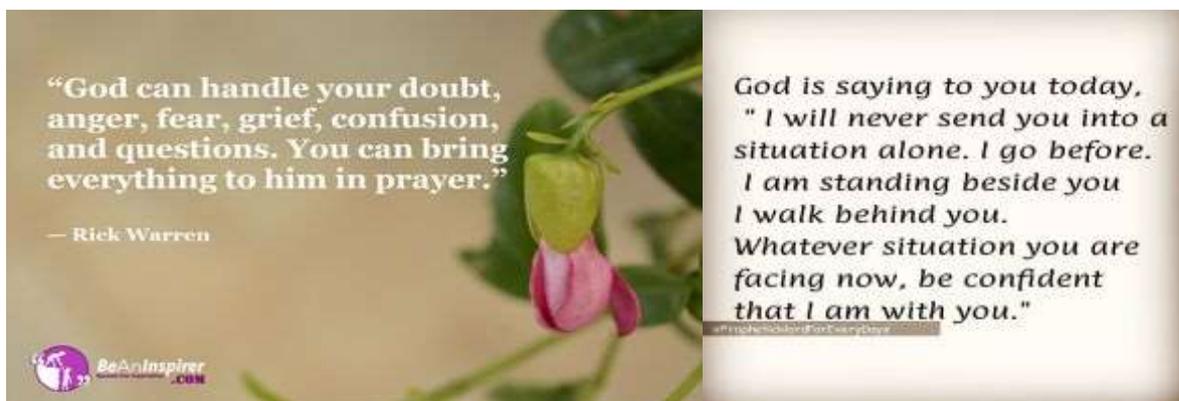
Written and compiled by
Edna Thomas

JOURNEY THROUGH GRIEF: COPING WITH THE UNEXPECTED DEATH OF A LOVED ONE

According to one writer, while sudden deaths have very different causes, what unites them all is that they are unexpected and consequently unanticipated. The people bereaved by these deaths have no time to prepare for their loss, or say goodbye. Their bereavement consequently comes as a shock; a bolt from the blue [sudden.org].

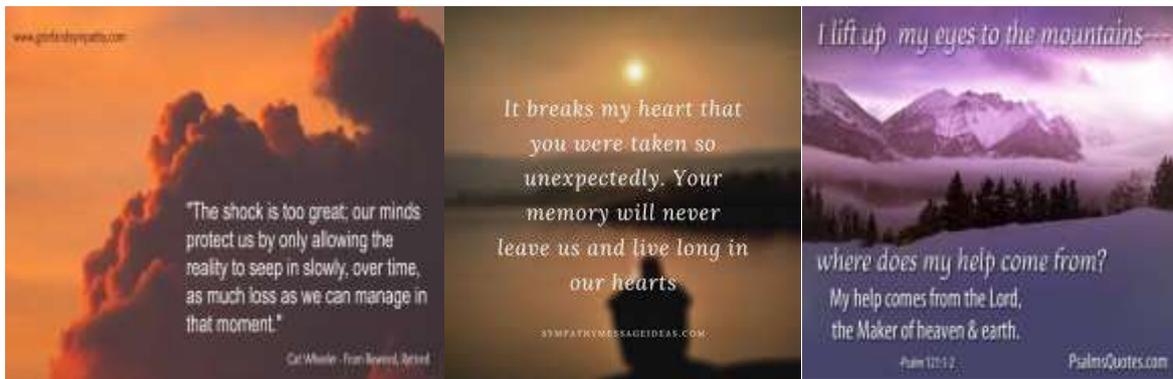


Another writer said that, when someone you loved dies unexpectedly, you get caught up in the world of disbelief, anger and so many unanswered questions: how could this be? How can you live without your loved one? Nothing makes sense. Confusion takes resident in your life and you walk around in a state of shock"



A psychologist described the sudden, unexpected death like this:

"We prefer to believe that our loved ones are safe from harm. We assume that accidents and illnesses will bypass them. So when tragedy strikes suddenly, we go into shock. Our entire being vibrates with a single word: *Why?* A sudden death shakes you to the core. You can't turn away from it; you can't reason with it. You know that life will never be the same".



What is grief?

- It is an internal emotion
- Grief has no set pattern. Everyone experiences grief differently.
- It is expressed in many ways and it can affect every part of your life; your emotions, thoughts and behaviour, beliefs, physical health, your sense of self and identity, and your relationships with others.
- Grief is always moving, like any journey, some portion will be harder and more demanding than others. In grief, so much is painful, sad, and frustrating. Some parts of your grief path will be more rocky, uphill, and challenging. You can only take one step at a time and live one moment at a time [[Gary Roe]



Causes of Sudden unexpected death

According to the writer of 'Sudden' [.org] sudden death is any kind of death that happens unexpectedly. For example:

- Sudden natural causes, such as heart attack, brain haemorrhage, or cot death.
- Miscarriage, stillbirth or at or after birth.
- Suicide
- Deaths through violent acts
- Road accidents
- Undiagnosed advanced terminal illness, such as advanced cancer
- Heart attack

Prayer for those who grieve

My Father, I come to you this day seeking you with all my heart and soul. Right now my God, I am consumed with hurt and deep sadness over the sudden unexpected death of my loved one. Lord, your word in Deuteronomy 31:8 said, "You will never leave nor forsake me", so I am looking to you right now for comfort, strength, and courage to face this challenging time. I believe with all my heart that in time the pain will lessen but please be with me, hold me close and wrap your arms around me. I am confident that in you, I can find peace and rest to cope with the loss of my loved one. Thank you my Father for hearing and answering my prayer in Jesus Name. Amen.

Scripture verse for a grieving heart

Psalm 23:4

- We Depend on His guidance to lead you out of that dark valley.



"I feel vulnerable, Lord. I am easily discouraged. My body is feeling the pressure of life and loss. Enable me to trust you. I release my burden to you". [Gary Roe].

The Six Needs of Mourning

Need 1: Acknowledge the reality of your grief and the pending loss

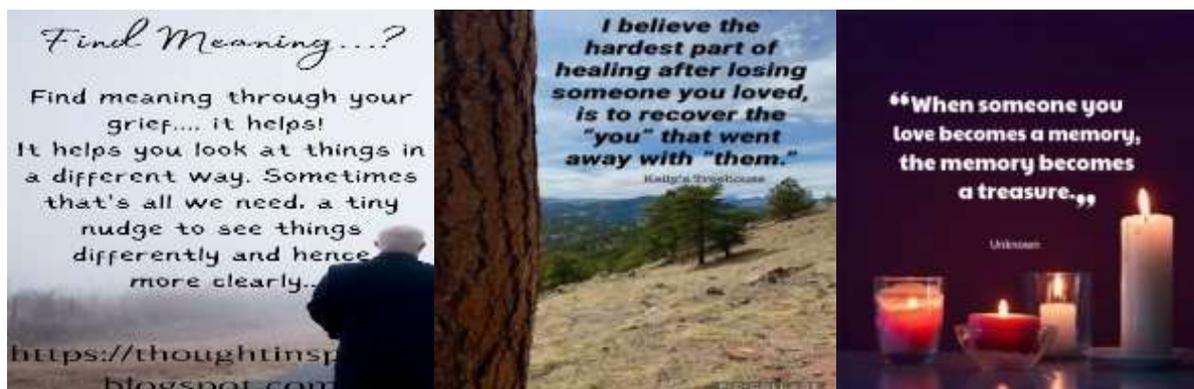
Need 2: embrace both the pain and the joy of your anticipatory grief.

Need 3: explore memories associated with the love or attachment you're losing

Need 4: develop a new identity.

Need 5: Search for meaning

Need 6: reach out for and accept support from others.



Reflection of a grieving person

"When I heard of the sudden, unexpected death of my loved one, I immediately went into the denial stage of grief (numbness, shock and disbelief). How can this be"? this can't be happening! What was suppose to a joyful time, turned into despair and deep sadness. Denial was followed by anger at the unfairness of the loss. In searching for answers, I questioned God- " How can this be? I don't understand why this has happened? Please let it not be true. In almost the same breath, I was asking God to comfort our hearts, to give us the strength to cope.



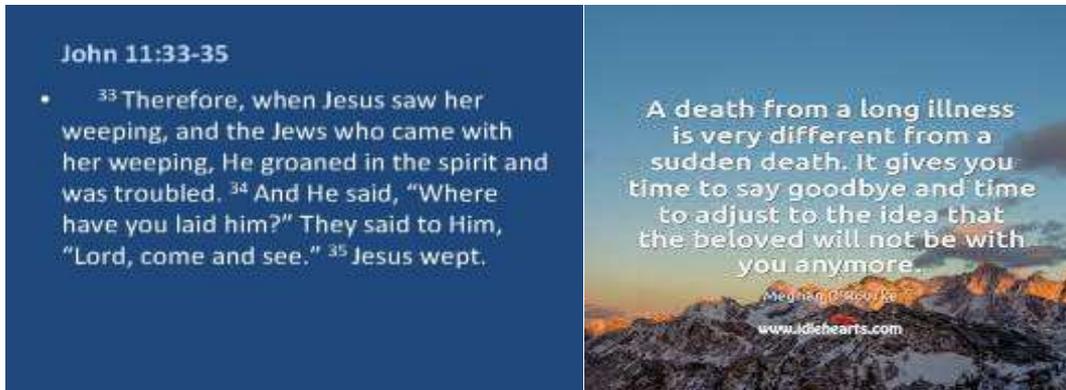
We can sometimes find ourselves being angry at God for the sudden unexpected death of a loved one. When this happens, it can cause us to feel guilty and unable to share this with anyone for fear of being judged. If you find yourself in this situation, don't allow this to take you from the presence of the Lord. The Bible says, "The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love" (Psalm 145:8).

- "Merciful Father, I am weak but you are strong. I am burdened with grief; my heart is heavy, my spirit is crushed. Be my strength in times of weakness; be my shelter from the storm of distress and deliver me from the pain of grief"

A thought

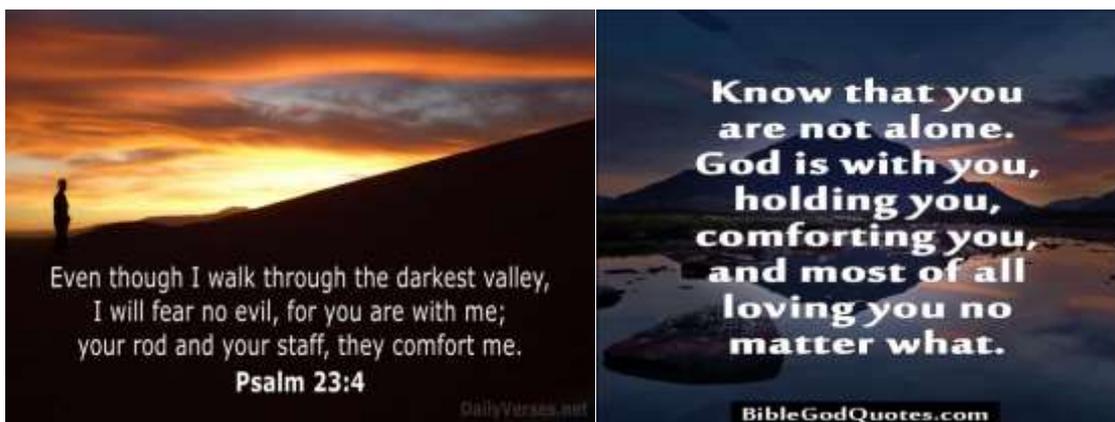
- "Grief is painful; grief is a part of life. In the same manner in which Jesus allowed Martha and Mary to express their grief at their brother's death, and He Himself wept; so He lets us grieve" (John 11:33-35).
- The death of a loved one is never easy, but it is even harder and more difficult to grasp when you've lost them through sudden unexpected death. No time for comforting words,

no time to say goodbye, no time for unfinished business to be resolved, no time to forgive or be forgiven, and no time to say "I love you".



- Sudden unexpected grief can cause the bereaved person to travel down a dark road-like walking through the deepest valley (Psalm 23). If you're not careful it could hold you captive to the extent that you might struggle to find your way back.

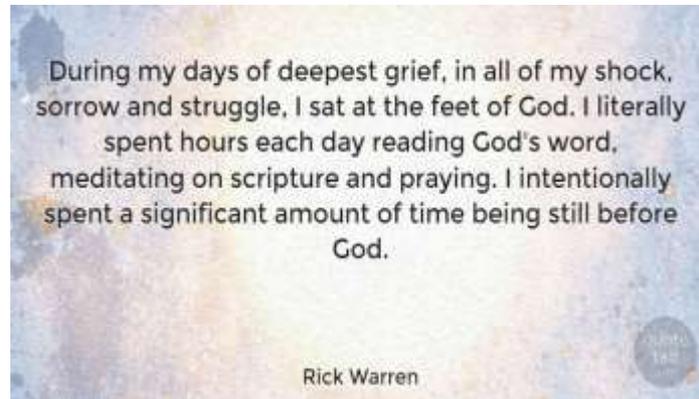
The Bereavement Café would like to encourage you that, "you are not climbing the mountain or walking in the deepest valley of grief on your own. Know that our God is walking right beside you every step of the way. When you're tired, He will carry you and when your heart is broken, He will comfort you. When you're tired, He will give you rest, and when you're weak, He'll give you strength".



Grieving during the pandemic

After the loss a loved one, it is not uncommon for people to be in a state of confusion, especially during the coronavirus pandemic. You could easily find yourself walking around in a state of shock, disbelief, anger (at yourself, the world; God), denial, guilt, self-blame. The

"what-if" questions might come flooding through your mind, distorting your thoughts and thinking.



The coronavirus didn't just keep us in isolation; some of us were robbed of a loving and kind relationship with our loved one. One way or another, our lives were touched with the deadly virus and we were all asking the same questions- 'will our lives ever be the same? Or will we return to 'normal?'

Many people who have lost loved ones are still grappling with unanswered questions, and all the "what-ifs" that they may or may not find answers to.

If you're grieving the loss of a loved one, the Bereavement Café is aware that you might be experiencing a range of emotions and this can be challenging especially if you're grieving alone. We would like to encourage you to draw from the strength that though you might be physically on your own, God's presence is always with you. . Proverbs 18:10 reminds us that "The Lord is a strong tower in fearful time. You can run into it and be safe- whenever you need it".



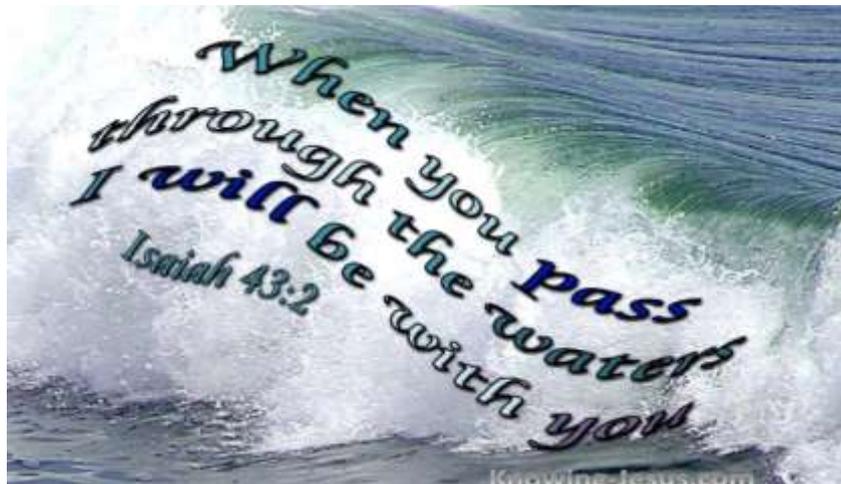
Grief-A pandemic experience

Reflection of a bereaved person

"I remembered clearly the day I stood helplessly as the ambulance crew drove away with my loved one. The painful memory that stuck in my mind was that, I wasn't able to with him in the ambulance or even see him in hospital. To make matters worse, that was the last time I saw him. He passed away without me saying a face-to-face goodbye to him. This was a feeling of total shock, disbelief and helplessness and anger.

Grieving on my own was a very challenging experience for me. Grief consumed me and there were times when I found it difficult to pray or read my Bible. I went into a state of depression- a place I would never want to be again. I'm so grateful to God for His faithfulness towards me. I give Him thanks that I am still getting the support I need to help me cope. I still have good days and not so good days but I continue to trust in the Lord".

If you're going through a similar experience, be encouraged that "in the midst of your grief, you don't walk this dark and despairing road of grief on your alone. God is actually at the helm of your life and He will go with you on your journey through grief. He gives the assurance through the voice of His prophet in the book of Isaiah 43:1-3"



- You may not find the answers you're looking for, but "The Good Shepherd of our lives will guide us to the springs of the living waters and He promises to wipe away every tear. God never leaves His flock to be on their own".

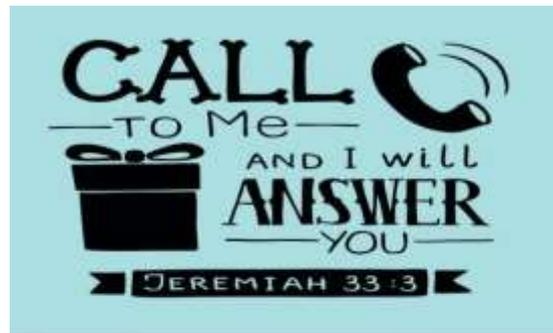
Visit our webpage: wntcg.org/bereavement

The Bereavement Café ministry is part of The Willesden New Testament Church of God

Remember that, " You may not be able to stop negative thoughts from passing through your mind or unhealthy emotions such as fear, worries, or anxiety gripping at your heart, but we can definitely anchor our thoughts and emotions on the unshakable Word of God" (Joseph Prince).

Please note!

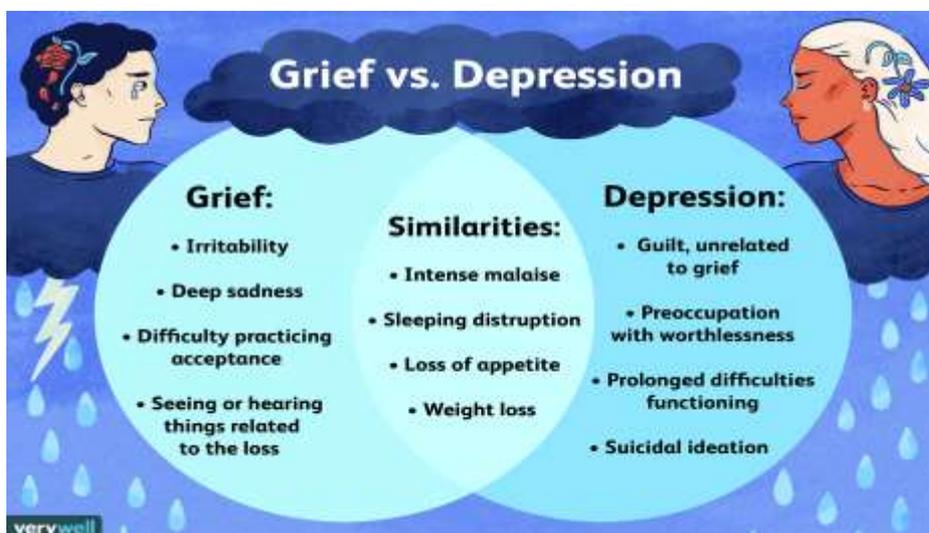
If you're feeling overwhelmed with the sudden unexpected death of a loved one; finding it difficult to cope with the grieving process, experiencing loneliness, struggling to cope on your own, or if you don't feel able to discuss your feelings with family or friends, please don't sit in silence; contact your GP or seek support from counselling professionals (list of contacts at the end of the Newsletter).



Common grief reactions

Emotions:

- Shock, numbness, sadness, denial, anger, guilt, helplessness, depression, and yearning.



Thoughts:

- Disbelief, confusion, difficulty concentrating, pre-occupation.

Physical:

- Tightness and heaviness in the chest or throat, nausea or stomach upset, headaches, muscle weakness, tension, or fatigue.

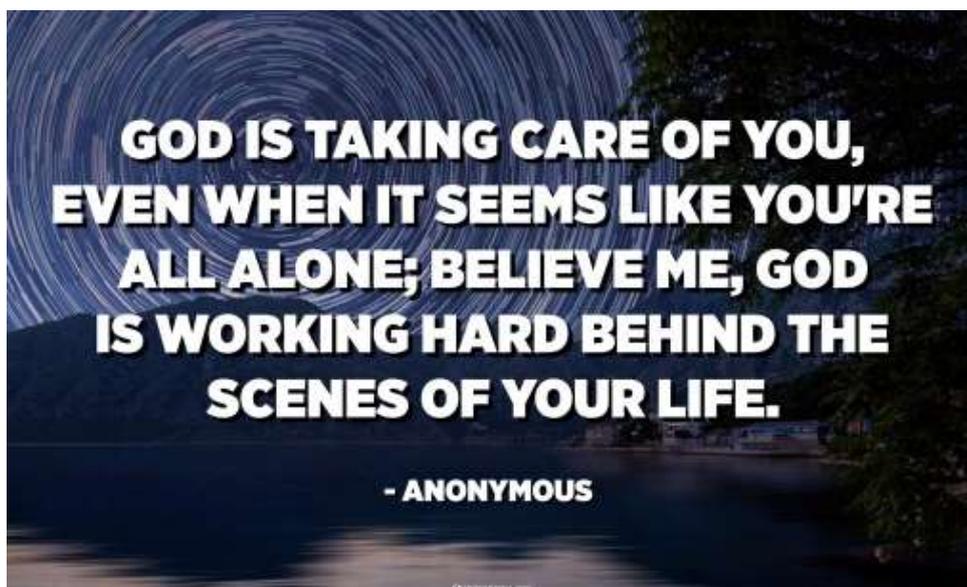
Behaviours:

- Difficulty in sleeping, loss of interest in daily activities, and becoming more aggressive or irritable.

Spiritual :

- Some may turn to God as a source of strength and consolation at the time of a loved one's death and find their faith has deepened;
- Others may question the religious teachings they've practiced all their lives and find the very foundations of their beliefs shaken to the core.

Not all people respond to loss in the same way, and not everyone shares the same cultural, religious or spiritual beliefs about death and the afterlife (Hospice of the Valley).



Stages of grief (Elizabeth Kübler-Ross')

What are the five stages of grief?

Denial

- Feeling numb is common in the early days after a bereavement. Some people at first carry on as if nothing has happened. Even if we know with our heads that someone has died it can be hard to believe that someone important is not coming back. It's also very common to feel the presence of someone who has died, hear their voice or even sense their presence.

Anger

- Anger is a completely natural emotion, and very natural after someone dies. Death can seem cruel and unfair, especially when you feel someone has died before their time or you had plans for the future together. It's also common to feel angry towards the person who has died, or angry at ourselves for things we did or didn't do before their death.



Bargaining

- When we are in pain, it's sometimes hard to accept that there's nothing we can do to change things. Bargaining is when we start to make deals with ourselves, or perhaps with God if you're religious. We want to believe that if we act in particular ways we will feel better. It's also common to find ourselves going over and over things that happened in

the past and asking a lot of 'what if' questions, wishing we could go back and change situations in the hope things could have turned out differently.



Depression

- Sadness and longing are what we think of most often when we think about grief. This pain can be very intense and come in waves over many months or years. Life can feel like it no longer holds any meaning which can be very scary.

Acceptance

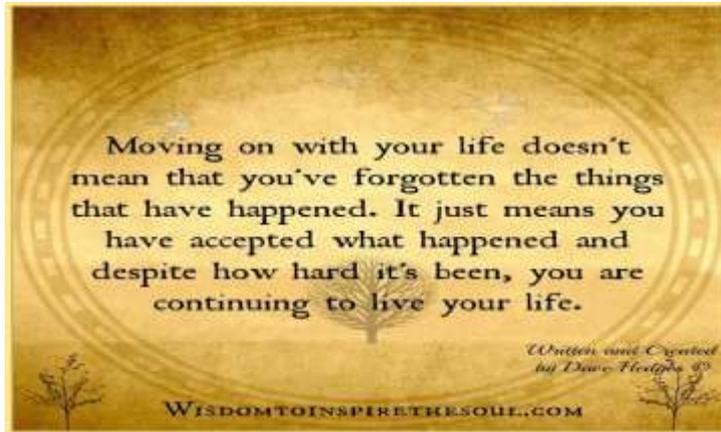
- Grief comes in waves and it can feel like nothing will ever be right again. But gradually most people find that the pain eases, and it is possible to accept what has happened. We may never 'get over' the death of someone precious, but we can learn to live again, while keeping the memories of those we have lost close to us [cruse.org.uk].



A grieving person's reflection on "Acceptance"

- "Everyone expects me to get over the loss of my loved one. Every time I talk about how I am feeling, I am told that I should accept the situation and move on. This makes feel

sad.... I can't do this!... how can I forget my dear beloved one? So I try not to talk about my loss, I keep my feelings to myself".

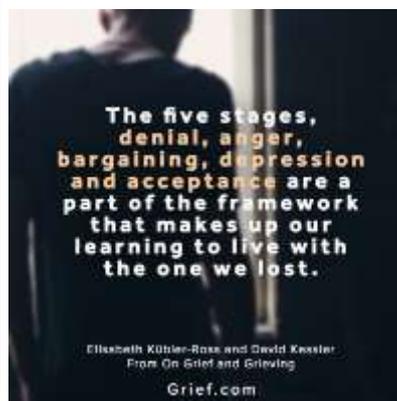
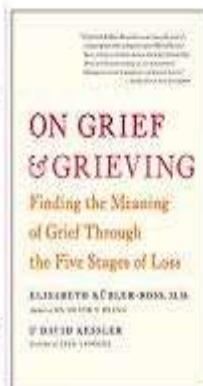


"Finding acceptance after the loss of a loved one may be just having more good days than bad" (Elizabeth Kubler-Ross & David Kessler)

"You will not 'get over' the loss of a loved one; you will learn to live with it. You will heal and you will rebuild yourself around the loss you have suffered. You will be whole again but you will never be the same. Nor should you be the same, nor would you want to."

Elizabeth Kübler-Ross & David Kessler

[Read More](#)



Reflecting on the Word of God

The psalmist in Psalm 121:3-4 described what occurs as you sleep.

"He will not let your foot slip—He who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, He who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep".

Ron Mehl (from the book 'Experiencing Grief') described the work that is occurring in the scripture (Psalm 121):

- God is aware of your pain and monitors every second of it.
- God is aware of your emptiness and seeks to fill it in a manner beyond your dreams.

Visit our webpage: wntcg.org/bereavement

The Bereavement Café ministry is part of The Willesden New Testament Church of God

- He is aware of your wounds and scars and knows how to draw forth a healing deeper than you can imagine.



Things you can do to help yourself cope:

- Identify and accept all of your feelings about the loss; although this might be difficult, it is an important part of the grieving process.
- Mourn at Your Own Pace
- Don't Be Afraid to Ask for Help
- Accept rather than deny your feelings, even unpleasant ones such as anger.

Take Care of Yourself

- Nourish your body with healthy foods
- Keep connected with family and friends and talk about how you're doing.
- **Use exercise to combat negative emotions**
- Write down your thoughts and feelings in your journal
- Learn to forgive and be kind to yourself



Remember that your loss is not something you need to "get over". Your life has been changed and will never be quite the same again. You are learning to "live with the loss".

Remind yourself that healing doesn't mean forgetting. Memories will remain. You will find a way to adjust.

Remember that, there is no timetable for grieving, so don't be too hard on yourself.

Do not compare your grief with someone else; it cannot be hurried or fast-tracked and everyone grieves differently.

Remember also that:



Your Basic needs



Practice Self-Compassion

- Self-compassion is giving yourself the kindness and care you would give to another.



**The second is this:
Love your neighbor
as yourself**
Mark 12:31
There is no commandment greater than these.

BE GENTLE WITH YOURSELF. YOU'RE DOING THE BEST YOU CAN

5 Simple Ways to Practice Self-Compassion
© 2018 Sharon Martin, LCSW

1. Cut yourself some slack.
2. Don't take other people's opinions of you too seriously.
3. Ask for help.
4. Notice what you're doing "right".
5. Give yourself a treat.

LiveWellwithSharonMartin.com

The Bereavement Café would like to welcome you to our Bereavement Support Group which takes place on the last Saturday of each month. Please see information below. If you would like more information, visit our website: www.wntcg.org/bereavement



Bereavement Café
SUPPORT GROUP

- * A safe space to talk, listen and be supported in your grief
- * Explore thoughts and emotions
- * Confront the fears and think about next steps
- * Grief support for the young and old

WE MEET THE
LAST SATURDAY OF EACH MONTH
BETWEEN 11AM-12:30PM

27 AUGUST
29 SEPTEMBER
26 NOVEMBER
31 DECEMBER

zoom Meeting ID: 813 5987 9482

Why not join us and meet/share with others who are going through their own journey of grief?

Our support group is informal and offers:

- A safe space to talk, listen, being listened to, and be supported in your grief.
- We provide a confidential and non-judgemental environment for those who are going through the grieving process.
- An opportunity to reflect and explore thoughts and feelings.
- Confront fears and think about next step.



Please Note:

- ✚ Remember to bear in mind that lockdown has eased but COVID is still out there! If at all possible, wear your masks especially in crowded places and maintain social distancing [as appropriate].



Resources



In need of bereavement support

- ✚ We recognise that "enduring the pain of a loved one is one of the most difficult challenges we can face in life. At its core, loss creates a void, a hole in your life that must be faced". If you feel at any time that you are not coping with bereavement, having suicidal thoughts or any other negative emotions, please do not sit in silence. Help is available!

If you are not able to talk about your feelings with a family member or friend, you can contact:

- ✚ Your Pastor or a member of the pastoral team
- ✚ Your GP
- ✚ www.wntcg.org/bereavement
- ✚ www.wntcg.org/care

OR



Free, local support for you **Bereavement HELPLINE**

By calling our Bereavement Support Helpline, you can:

- ✚ Benefit from a listening ear and emotional support
- ✚ Find information & guidance on what to do after someone has died
- ✚ Discover free, local support in your community, tailored to you

Call our Helpline now on **01279 967670**



Other Bereavement Organisations

- ✚ Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Charity (SANDS) - provides information and support for anybody affected by the death of a baby.
- ✚ Sudden - helps people who have experienced a sudden bereavement to access specialist information and advice (Sudden Bereavement Help 0800 2600 400).
- ✚ Samaritans Helpline: 08457 909090, 24 hours a day
- ✚ Cruse Bereavement Care: 0808 808 1677

Grief Encounter: Provides support to children and families who have been bereaved via phone, online chat and email.

- ✚ You can also take part in group activities with likeminded families at their Sundays, Grief Groups and Remembrance Days.

Phone open Monday-Friday 9am-9pm:
0808 802 0111

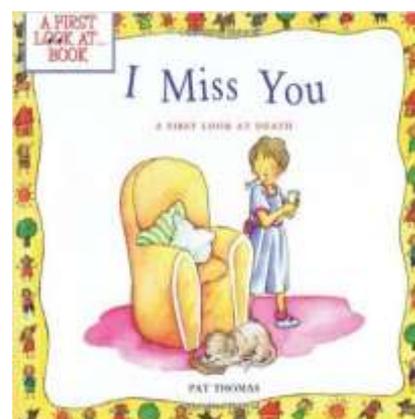
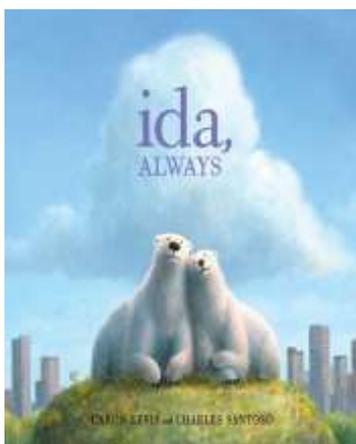
Online chat - Email: griefftalk@griefencounter.org.uk

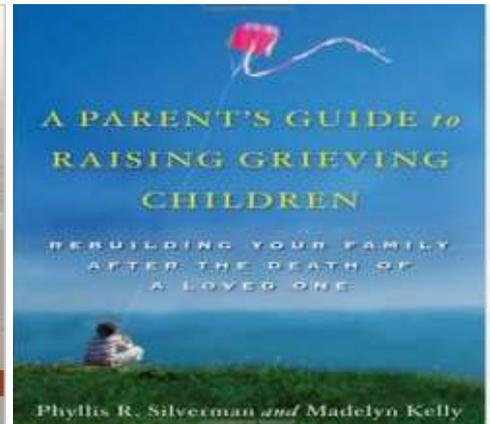
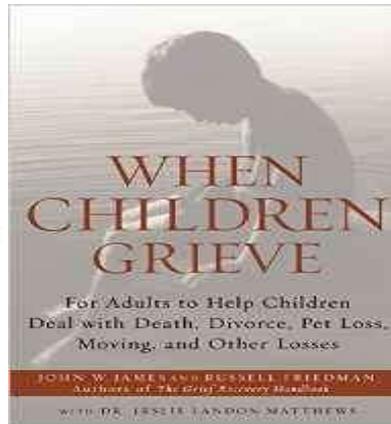
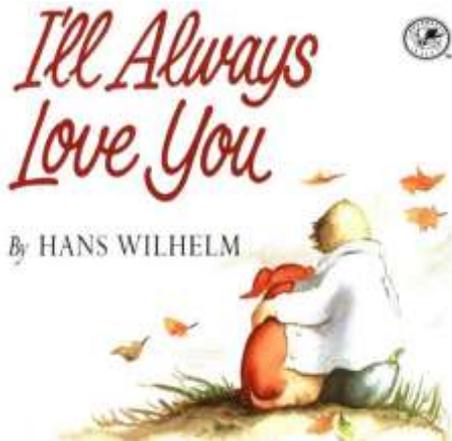
- ✚ Association of Christian Counsellors (ACC) - Telephone 024 7644 9694

Reading Resources on Grief:



Resources for children and young people





Other Resources on Grief:

- Donna R. Williams & JoAnn Sturzl- *Grief Ministry*
- Norman Wright - *Experiencing Grief*
- Marty Tousley- *Finding Your Way Through Grief: A Guide for the First Year*
- William Worden - *Grief Counselling and Grief Therapy*
- Tom Zuba - *Permission of Grieve : A New Way To Do Grief*
- Malcolm Duncan: *Good Grief -Living with Sorrow and Loss.*

Bereavement

How other people can help



Do remember that appearances can be deceptive

I may look as if I'm coping okay, but inside I may be falling apart.



Don't be unprepared for the truth

Don't ask me how I am if you only want to hear "I'm okay thank you."



Do invite me out to coffee or lunch

Just to change the scene for a while.



Don't tell me that you've been too busy to phone or get in touch

Better to say "I didn't know what to say."



Do be ready to listen

To all the jumble of emotions I may be feeling without being judgemental.



Don't try and give me answers

It is unlikely that you will have any that will satisfy me – just allow me to express all my fears, questions and doubts.



Do encourage me

To be kind to myself and not to push myself to meet other people's expectations of how I should be.



Don't measure the way I react

Or the emotions I express by your own expectations or experience. My grief is unique to me.



Do be aware that there will be times when I don't feel able to talk

But this doesn't mean I won't want to talk at another time.



Don't feel you have to do something

Just be there.

For more information on bereavement support please visit:
www.careforthefamily.org.uk/family-life/bereavement-support

