

Feelings after
someone dies

Large print version

Cruse
Bereavement
Support

Feelings after someone dies

Grieving is natural and normal. It's not an illness, although it can make you feel ill. It won't last forever, although there may be times when it seems like the pain will never end. There's no 'right' way to grieve and we each react in our own way. But people often tell us about the following emotions.

Common emotions after someone dies

Shock and numbness

At first you might feel like you're in shock. You might feel numb or carry on as if nothing has changed. This is because it can take a long time to process what has happened. You may also feel disorientated – as if you have lost your place in your world. It's important to know that all of these feelings are normal.

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Pain

The death of someone close to us is the most devastating experience that will ever happen to us. It can be very painful. People describe it as being cut in two or losing a part of themselves. These feelings can be very frightening and upsetting. Many people cry a lot.

Anger

It's normal to feel angry when someone dies. Death can seem cruel and unfair, especially when you feel someone has died too young or if you had plans for the future together. You might feel angry at the person who died or angry at others. You may even be angry at yourself for things that you did or didn't do while they were alive.

Guilt

Guilt is another common reaction to grief. You might feel directly or indirectly to blame for the person's death. Or you might feel guilty if you had a difficult relationship with the person who has died. Try not to be hard on yourself, and remember the good things you did as well as any regrets.

Depression

You may feel depressed after the death of someone close. It can feel like nothing matters. You might even feel like you don't want to go on living. If you start to feel you

might act on suicidal feelings please talk to someone. Your GP can let you know about mental health support in your local area.

Seeing and hearing the person

People sometimes think they can hear or see the person who has died. “Seeing” the person who has died and hearing their voice can happen because our brain is trying to process the death and accept that it’s final. It’s important to know this is normal.

Difficulty concentrating and being preoccupied

You may find that it is difficult to concentrate. You may also find that you can’t stop thinking about the events leading up to the death.

Physical feelings

It is common to feel physically ill after someone dies – the pain of grief can be felt as a real pain. Every part of your health can be affected.

When will I feel better?

People often ask us how long the grief will last. The truth is that healing comes slowly, but it usually becomes easier to cope with over time. Nothing can replace the person who has died. But gradually most people find they are

able to continue with life, and start to feel happy at times, while still remembering those who have died.

What can help?

Talk to someone. Try to find a trusted friend, or someone in your community you can talk to. Or contact the Cruse helpline (see below).

Look after yourself. It can be difficult, but try to keep to a routine of eating, sleeping and getting a little bit of exercise.

Find ways to remember them. It can help to think of ways you can remember the person who has died, and keep them as part of your life.

For more support call our helpline

0808 808 1677