



What to do when someone dies

A practical and emotional guide



0113 218 5500

www.st-gemma.co.uk

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Introduction

We are all likely to experience a bereavement at least once in our lives and it can be a devastating experience. The grief we feel is a completely natural response to the death of someone we care about. There is no right or wrong way to grieve and everyone is different in their response.

This booklet has been written by St Gemma's staff to help guide you through this difficult time. It will provide an overview of the practical tasks that may require your attention at this time and over the next few weeks as well as the emotional issues you may face when someone important to you dies. The information has been divided into sections to make it easier for you to navigate.

If you feel you're not ready to read this booklet yet, you may want to come back to it later. For support you could ask a family member or friend to look at the information with you.

If you would like to speak to someone from St Gemma's, call **0113 218 5500** and a member of the Family Support Team will be in touch to advise you.



Section 1. Practical advice when someone dies

St Gemma's Hospice staff will make every effort to prepare you when the death of your family member or friend is close. When someone significant to you dies there are often practical tasks that may require attention and this can feel overwhelming. The most important thing is that you do not feel rushed or under pressure.

What to do when someone dies at home

There is a lot to take in when someone close to you dies and some official things that need attention. It can feel overwhelming but remember that you do not need to do everything yourself. Some people find it helpful to have a family member or friend support them. A Funeral Director can also be a helpful guide.

Here are some of the practical tasks that usually need to happen shortly after someone has died:

Notifying the health service

If your family member or friend has been cared for at home, and the death is expected, a **Community Nurse** from the **Neighbourhood Team** is often involved. It is important to contact the Neighbourhood Team when your family member or friend dies as they can advise you on what to do next. They will visit to confirm the person has died (known as formal verification of death).

If a Community Nurse is not able to verify the death or if the death is unexpected, you will need to contact the person's GP, or the out of hours GP service via NHS 111. They will arrange a visit to confirm the person has died.

All those involved should try to respect any wishes that the person had about how their body should be cared for, including religious and cultural observances. Contact the Funeral Director, if you are using one. They will arrange for the collection of the deceased who will be taken to the funeral home, and will remain there until the funeral.

Registering the death

A doctor will need to complete the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death and liaise with the Medical Examiner System in Leeds. The Medical Examiner will review the medical record to agree a cause of death, and contact the next of kin to provide an opportunity to ask questions or raise concerns

They will then forward the Medical Certificate to the Register Office. A registrar will contact the next of kin/informant by text message, email, or phone and provide a link to the online appointment booking form.



When booking the appointment, you will need the following:

- ♥ An email address
- ♥ A credit or debit card if you want to pay for death certificates in advance
- ♥ Details about the person's death, such as, their name, date of death and place of death

A death is usually registered within the first 5 days (unless they have been referred to the coroner) and can be done by a friend, family member or the Funeral Director.

What you need to bring to the appointment. The Registrar will ask for the following information about the deceased:

- ♥ Date and place of death
- ♥ Date and place of birth
- ♥ Full legal name (including maiden or previously used names)
- ♥ Occupation
- ♥ Last known address
- ♥ Marital Status
- ♥ Your (the informant's) address
- ♥ Full name of surviving spouse or civil partner

The Registrar will issue the Death Certificate and a Certificate of Burial or Cremation. These will need to be given to the Funeral Director. Death Certificates cost £12.50 each. We recommend buying multiple copies to handle the Will, estate, and property. Many companies now require digital uploads for managing deceased estates, reducing paper use. An urgent express service is available for £38.50.

For more information about registering a death visit:
www.leeds.gov.uk/births-deaths-and-marriages or
call 0113 222 4408.

What to do when someone dies on the In-Patient Unit at St Gemma's Hospice

We will make every effort to prepare and support you when the death of your family member or friend is near, accommodating any religious or cultural observances and allowing you time to be with them.

The experience of losing a family member or friend can be very distressing and difficult to accept. You may have questions that you wish to ask about the illness and death. Our medical team will do their best to give you time to talk and answer any questions you may have.

- ♥ At St Gemma's Hospice we will ensure that the relevant legal processes are completed such as the verifying and certifying of death.
- ♥ Our doctors will liaise with the Medical Examiner's office in Leeds who perform an independent review of the medical notes in line with national guidance.
- ♥ The ward team will provide next of kin details to the Medical Examiner, who will call to explain the cause of death and address any concerns about the care provided. If a different contact is more appropriate, please inform the nursing team.
- ♥ To find out more about the Medical Examiner system please scan the QR code below.
- ♥ Our ward team will ask about your choice of Funeral Director if not already discussed. We will coordinate the transfer of the deceased to them for funeral arrangements. If undecided, the Hospice has a local Funeral Director who can care for the deceased until you choose.
- ♥ Once the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death is issued, it will be sent electronically to the Register Office. The registrar will then contact the next of kin or informant by text, email, or phone and provide a link to the online appointment booking form.

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If a post-mortem is needed

In some circumstances, a death will need to be referred to the coroner, who might decide that a post-mortem is needed. This is an examination of a body to find out the cause of death. This can be for a number of reasons, even when the death was anticipated.

Some examples include:

- ♥ If the person had any falls weeks before their death
- ♥ If they had any operations months before they died
- ♥ If the illness they had might have been due to an industrial disease

Usually, no further action is required. However, a referral to the coroner can sometimes cause a slight delay in issuing the Death Certificate. A senior doctor at the Hospice will inform you if it is anticipated that they will need to refer to the coroner.



Personal effects and belongings

Your family member or friend's personal effects and belongings will need to be returned to you from the ward. They may have valuables such as a watch, jewellery or money in the ward safe. Please check that the nurse has remembered to include these in their belongings. If there are certain items you wish to remain with the deceased, such as a wedding ring, please let staff know.

The person's wishes

You will need to establish if the person has a Will and check who has been appointed to sort out their affairs (known as the Executor). The person may have left specific instructions for their funeral in their Will or letter of wishes or discussed this with you before they died.

If there is no Will, contact the Probate and Inheritance Tax Helpline on **0300 123 1072**. They will be able to guide you.

Citizens Advice - 0800 144 8848

www.citizensadvice.org.uk National network of advice centres offering free, confidential, independent advice, face to face or by telephone

Planning a funeral

Planning a funeral can be difficult, particularly at a time when you are managing feelings of loss and grief. Planning one's own funeral is becoming more common and can relieve family and friends of difficult decisions at a stressful time. Not everyone wants to do this. But having conversations and planning ahead can help people close to you celebrate your life in a meaningful way.

Most people choose to use a Funeral Director but you do not have to. It is possible and legal to arrange the funeral yourself with the burial ground or crematorium, or at least make some of the arrangements.

Things to consider when planning a funeral

- ♥ Who will take responsibility for contacting the Funeral Director and organising the day?
- ♥ Burial or cremation? If so, where?
- ♥ Are there any wishes about how the body should be prepared for burial or cremation?
- ♥ If no instructions have been left in respect of funeral wishes, decision making can be difficult. It may be helpful to speak to relatives, friends or the Funeral Director about what the person may have wanted.
- ♥ How to explain a funeral to a young child and should children attend?

Explain funerals to children: www.childbereavementuk.org/how-do-i-explain-a-funeral-to-a-young-child

The Good Funeral Guide: www.goodfuneralguide.co.uk

Gifts in lieu of flowers and funeral collection boxes

When arranging a funeral, families often ask guests to make a donation in lieu of flowers. This is a good way to pay tribute to the person who has died, by supporting a cause that meant a lot to them.

We do receive many donations from funeral collections. As a local charity, we are most grateful for any donations and offers of support.

If you would like to arrange a funeral collection or fundraise in-memory of your loved one, you can do this in a few ways:

1. Many Funeral Directors offer a donation collection service; providing a donation box and sending the funds directly to us. As we receive the funds via the Funeral Director, please be aware we may not have your details to thank you directly for your generosity.
2. We can provide branded and personalised collection boxes with donation envelopes. Please email **individualgiving@st-gemma.co.uk** to request a box to borrow, or visit our website.
3. We offer a memory page service, free of charge through MuchLoved. This platform allows you to make a personalised dedication page where you can raise money that will come to us directly. Visit **www.st-gemma.co.uk/memory-pages** to set one up in a few easy steps.

Paying for the funeral

The person who died may have a prepaid funeral plan, insurance or other money set aside. Check what the plan covers.

Funeral costs usually come out of the person's estate. If so, the Executor of the estate will take care of paying the funeral bill.

Most banks and building societies will release funds from the person's accounts to pay for the funeral once they have seen a certified copy of the person's Death Certificate. Otherwise, usually a relative or friend pays for the funeral.

If you are in receipt of certain benefits and need help to pay for the funeral you may be eligible for the Social Fund Funeral Expenses Payment. Spouses or civil partners may also be eligible for the Bereavement Support Payment.

For more information contact the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) on **0800 731 0469** or visit **www.gov.uk/funeral-payments**.



For people who are having difficulty in covering the funeral cost it is worth comparing prices. There is no reason to rush. It is your choice and there are 'simple funeral packages' available (see the end of this section for more information).

Crowdfunding is used to raise money for all kinds of reasons, including funeral costs. It involves creating an online page where people can donate to a particular cause. It can create a space in which people feel more able to contribute, especially if they can only give a little. Lots of people donating small amounts can really add up.

If someone dies without sufficient funds to pay for a funeral and no one to take responsibility for it, the Local Authority will arrange a Public Health Funeral.

For more information on this, contact:

Adult Social Care

0113 222 4401 www.leeds.gov.uk/births-deaths-and-marriages/death/public-health-funerals

Ten Steps To An Affordable Funeral

quakersocialaction.org.uk/we-can-help/helping-funerals

Quaker Social Action Down To Earth

020 8983 5055 quakersocialaction.org.uk

Quaker Social Action helps people on low incomes across the UK to seek solutions to the issues affecting their lives.

Money Helper

0800 015 4402 www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en

Free and impartial money advice set up by the Government. Includes budgeting tools and planners, debt advice and guidelines on paying for funerals and care.

Religious or secular services

If you are organising a religious ceremony the faith leader will be able to advise on customs and traditions. You can contact their place of worship to make arrangements for the funeral including the collection of the deceased.

If you are not having a religious ceremony, then the Funeral Director may suggest a Celebrant who will conduct the service (see contact details for national organisations at the end of this section).



The Church of England - www.churchofengland.org

The Catholic Church - www.cbcew.org.uk

United Synagogue - 020 8343 8989 theus.org.uk/burial

Offers advice, guidance and support for planning a Jewish funeral ceremony.

The Muslim Council of Britain - 0845 2626 786

Contact the Council for advice on Muslim funeral ceremonies.

Humanist UK - 020 7324 3060 humanism.org.uk

Humanist UK can advise and help you find a Celebrant in your area if you would like a non-religious funeral ceremony.

The Buddhist Society - 020 7834 5858 thebuddhistsociety.org

The Buddhist society may be able to advise you or suggest local contacts who are able to assist with organising Buddhist funeral services.

Repatriation

If your family member or friend expressed a wish to be buried or cremated overseas, speak to members of their community, faith leader or a Funeral Director for guidance through the process.

Returning medications

All unused medication should be taken to a local pharmacy for safe disposal. You will need to inform the chemist if there are any controlled drugs as these have to be documented separately which takes time.



Returning equipment

Your family member or friend may have been loaned equipment. Different services supply a range of equipment such as; special beds, hoists, wheelchairs, bathroom aids, oxygen machines and many others.

Each piece of equipment should have a label with the details of the supplier. For the collection of equipment you will need to contact the appropriate service. It may take up to two weeks for the items to be collected. The relevant organisation will be able to advise you.

Leeds Community Equipment Service

0113 378 3300 www.leeds.gov.uk/adult-social-care/help-at-home/equipment-to-help-you-live-at-home

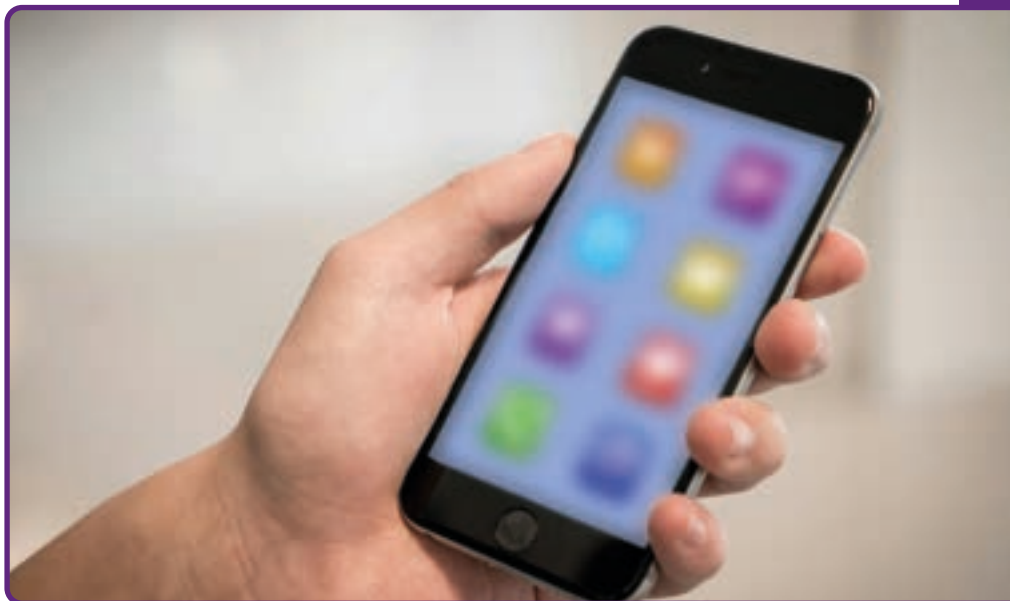
Informing organisations about a death

Tell Us Once - This service lets you report a death to most government organisations in one go. A Registrar will provide information on Tell Us Once when you register the death. They will either: complete the Tell Us Once service with you or provide a unique reference number so you can use the service yourself online or by phone.

What to do after someone dies: Tell Us Once - **GOV.UK Search 'Tell Us Once'** or call: 0800 085 7308.

Settld - Free service which allows multiple companies to be contacted in one go, such as banks, utilities and social media accounts. **www.settld.care 0333 111 1111**

It might be helpful to make a list of the people and organisations you need to inform. This may seem overwhelming and might be something that a family member or friend can support with.



See list of organisations below:

- ♥ Government departments
- ♥ Medical care providers: GP, dentist, optician, etc.
- ♥ Banks and building societies
- ♥ Insurance companies
- ♥ Mortgage providers, housing associations or council housing offices
- ♥ Utility companies
- ♥ Employers or trade unions
- ♥ Royal Mail
- ♥ Clubs, church, and other organisations the person was involved in
- ♥ Email and Social Media and other online accounts
- ♥ Accountant, solicitor or Executors appointed in the Will

Digital Legacy Association digitallegacyassociation.org How to manage a person's online presence after they die.

Entitlements and benefits

You may be entitled to certain benefits after someone has died. These include:

- ♥ Bereavement Support Payment
- ♥ Child Benefit
- ♥ Funeral Expenses Payments or Assistance
- ♥ War Widow(er) Pension
- ♥ Widowed Parent's Allowance
- ♥ Guardian's Allowance (if you are bringing up a child whose parents have died)

Gov.uk has information about the above, including who would qualify and how to apply. The Tell Us Once service can check if you are eligible. You can also call the Bereavement Service Advice Centre on **0800 634 9494**.

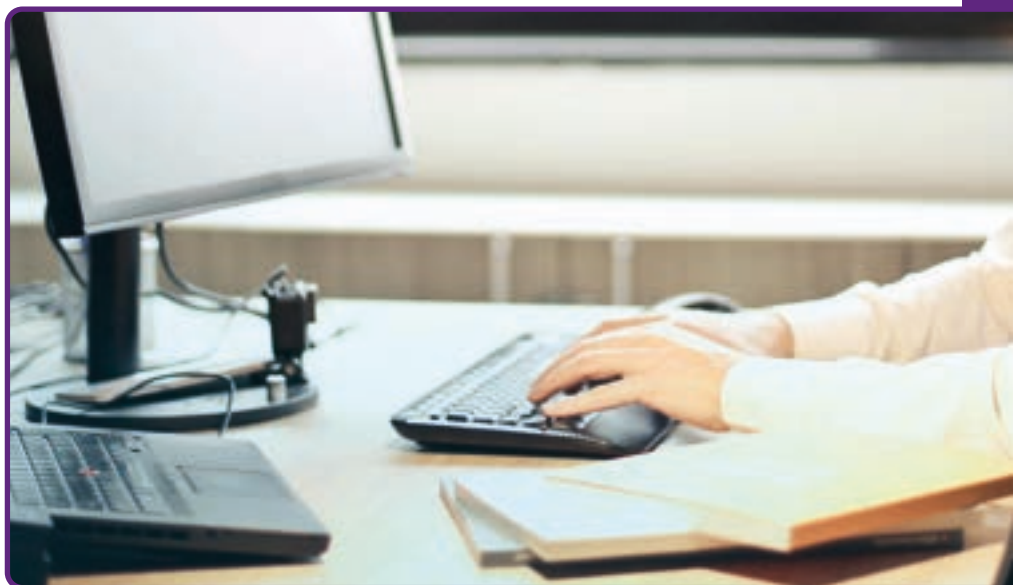
Compassionate leave

Compassionate leave can be paid or unpaid time off work for people who are in difficult circumstances, such as when you are bereaved. Organisations will have their own policies for compassionate leave, so check the policy for your place of work.

If you are refused compassionate leave you can use annual leave or unpaid leave. If you are struggling to cope and it is affecting your health, speak with your GP.

You can access impartial, independent advice on workplace rights and rules relating to bereavement with Acas.

www.acas.org.uk/bereavement



Section 2. Bereavement and grief support

We are all likely to experience the death of a loved one at some point in our lives and it can be a devastating experience. The grief we feel as a result of this is not a medical condition but a natural, normal and healthy response.

We are all individuals who experience grief in different ways. There is no right or wrong way to grieve and every person is different in their response, depending on our own feelings as well as the nature of the relationship with the person who has died. There is no set pattern or neat pathway that is the correct way to grieve.

We cannot fix or avoid grief as we have to go through it and eventually we find a way to live around it.



The important role of funerals and remembrance ceremonies

It can take some time for the reality of the death to sink in. Some people say that they know it in their heads but it does not feel real. This means that you may act as though your loved one is still alive, for example, expecting them to come home from work or seeing them in their favourite chair.

The funeral or other type of ceremony can be an opportunity to show your respect for your loved one and also help their death to become real.

It can be difficult to make decisions soon after someone has died but try to make time to think about how you want to say goodbye, for example favourite music, readings, poetry can help it to be full of meaning.

If children are part of the family it is important that they are included in this. It can be difficult to talk to children about death as instinctively you want to protect children from the pain that grief can cause.

It is important that children are included so they feel adults are being open, honest and trustworthy and helps them also process the loss. St Gemma's has a dedicated Bereavement Service for children and young people and more information about this can be found at the end of this section.



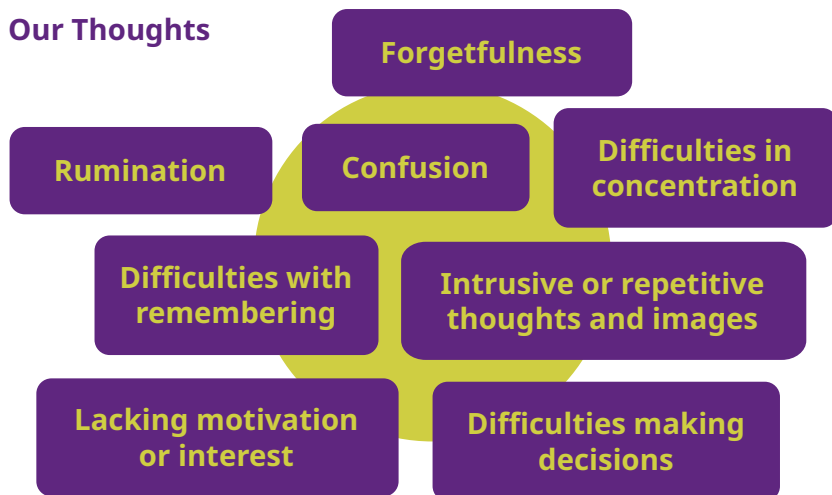
Common grief responses

Grief can affect how we are feeling emotionally, physically, our thoughts, behaviours and our spirituality. You may experience some of the following:

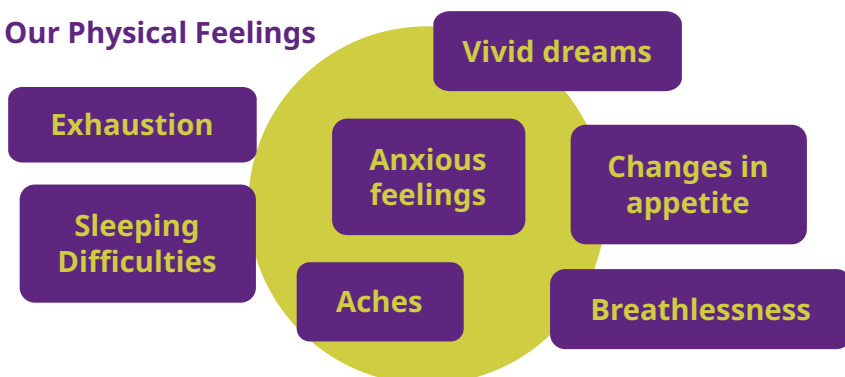
Our Emotions



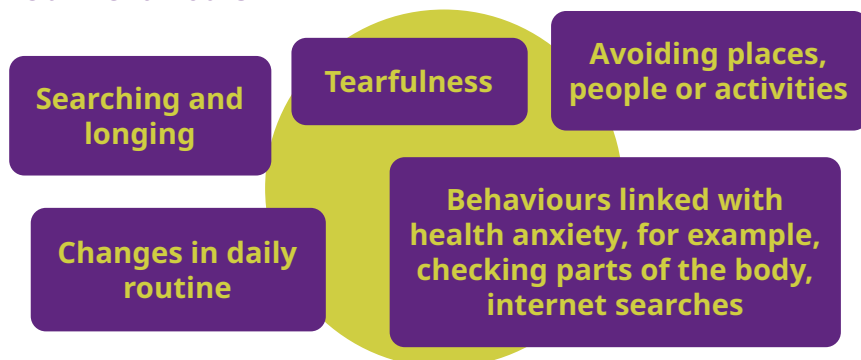
Our Thoughts



Our Physical Feelings



Our Behaviours



Spirituality

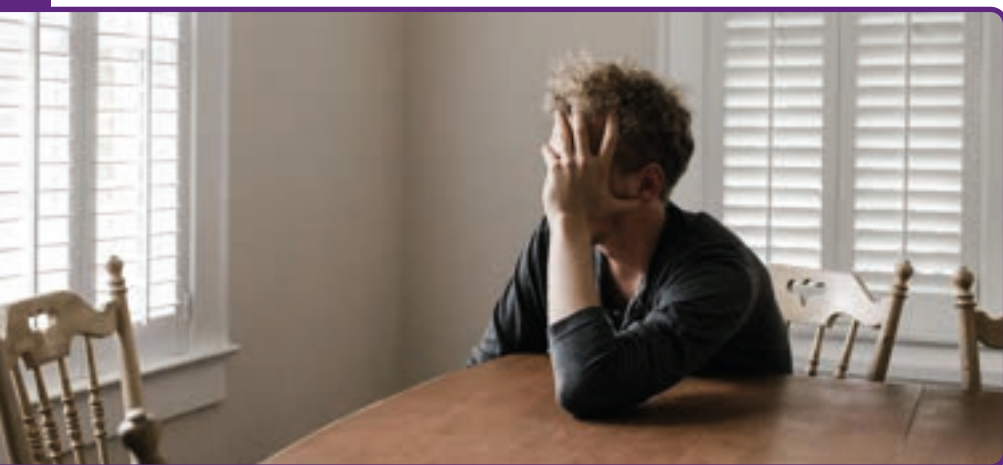
When someone experiences a loss, it can affect the way they think and feel about their spirituality. Alongside feelings of grief, anger, sadness and loss, quite often people find themselves questioning why bad things happen, which may lead them also to question their faith.

Conversely, some people find it extremely comforting to have a faith, and may find their faith is strengthened, renewed or they discover faith through their bereavement journey.

The grieving process

These responses can all be going on at the same time. Grief feelings are unpredictable which means that sometimes people feel powerless to cope with it. It is often very different from what they imagined. The feelings can change from day to day, hour to hour.

Because of the overwhelming nature of grief, people sometimes think they are “going mad”. Often people are shocked at this unpredictability and intensity, which is often different from what they had imagined.



- ♥ Sometimes we can be taken by surprise, for example, hearing a piece of music in the supermarket can set off our grief feelings. This is normal.
- ♥ The way we grieve can also be affected by our culture and upbringing – in some cultures open expression of emotion and distress is encouraged, whereas in other cultures there may be discomfort with this and being reserved is encouraged.
- ♥ Everyone experiences grief uniquely; do not feel pressured to behave a certain way.
- ♥ Part of the work of grief is to make sense of something which feels senseless.
- ♥ It will not go on with the same intensity forever.
- ♥ We learn to live without our loved one's physical presence, but their memories, influence, and love remain with us.

Some Ways to Cope

- ♥ Express your feelings as much as you can. You may not want to show your feelings all of the time but do try to be open and share them with someone you trust. Allow yourself to feel sad.
- ♥ Keep in touch with people. Talk through your experience with someone you trust or get support from the Bereavement Service at St Gemma's or other appropriate organisation.
- ♥ Reflect on your loved one and your feelings.
- ♥ Notice the things that give you a sense of wellbeing and do them e.g. small things like going for a walk. Creative things like art or writing can be an opportunity to express your feelings and relax.
- ♥ Be cautious when making major decisions about life changes soon after someone has died. Give yourself time to think about them and talk them through with others.
- ♥ Ensure you fully understand financial or legal arrangements before committing.

- ♥ Anniversaries, birthdays, and special days can be challenging, both in anticipation and in the moments themselves. Some plan alternative activities, others stick to their routines, and some prefer to spend these days quietly or with close friends and family.
- ♥ Returning to work after a bereavement can help some, but others may need time off. It can be challenging to know how others will react or if they'll say the wrong thing. If possible, communicate your needs and how colleagues can support you. Discuss with your manager the support you require, preferred interactions, and if you need a space or time out.

Other things that can help

- ♥ Support from others can make a big difference
- ♥ Keep a routine
- ♥ Eat healthily
- ♥ Avoid things that numb pain e.g drugs or alcohol
- ♥ Go to counselling if it feels right
- ♥ Contact support groups - sharing with others who have had similar experiences can be very helpful
- ♥ Plan special days and things to look forward to
- ♥ Spend time with family, friends and other loved ones. It can help to be with people who are also going through something similar to you
- ♥ Contact your doctor if you feel unwell
- ♥ Sometimes researching or reading about grief can normalise difficult feelings or a phone call with a Bereavement Service can help to reassure you that these feelings are normal
- ♥ If you would like to commemorate your loved one or make a dedication in their honour, St Gemma's can support you with this. More information can be found below

Section 3. How St Gemma's can help

We offer a Bereavement Service at the Hospice which you may find of help now or at any point in the future.

Individual support

We offer confidential individual bereavement support and counselling. It may help you to explore your feelings and look at what is specifically troubling you.

We offer an initial appointment followed by up to six sessions in the first instance. Towards the end of these sessions, you and your worker can explore whether further support would be helpful and we are able to offer up another six sessions. All sessions are weekly and can be face to face or on the telephone/zoom. We offer appointments during the day Monday-Friday and also one evening per week.



The Bereavement Café

Our Bereavement Café meets on a Friday morning from 10.15am - 12.15pm. This is a social group for people who have experienced a bereavement in the last two years and over 8 weeks ago. It is a space for people who have had similar experiences to meet and provide mutual support in a relaxed atmosphere. Staff and Café volunteers from the Bereavement Service are also there. Refreshments are provided. People are welcome to attend the café for up to eighteen months.

Growing around Grief Group

We run a structured 6 week group for people who have been bereaved in the last year. The group is an opportunity to meet other people in a similar situation, to explore how we may experience grief, how we remember our important person and look to the future with hope. The group runs three times a year with January, April and September start dates. Please contact the St Gemma's Bereavement Service on **0113 306 9167** for more details about how we can support you.



Supporting children and young people

We have specialist children and young people's workers who can offer support and advice to parents and families. The team also run regular activity days and trips for children to meet others who have had a similar experience. Individual bereavement support sessions are also offered.



Please visit www.st-gemma.co.uk.young-peoples-service or call **0113 218 5500** for information.

Ways to remember your loved one

At some point along your bereavement journey you might think about the ways in which you would like to commemorate the special person you've lost. There are lots of ways to do this and it depends what mattered to the person who has died. Some people like to plant trees, and there are a few organisations that allow this. You can plant memorial trees through the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust.

If there was a park or area of Leeds particularly significant for your loved one then Leeds City Council do offer some memorial options including plaques and benches.

www.leeds.gov.uk/births-deaths-and-marriages/death/bereavement-services/buying-memorials-and-graves
Phone: **0113 378 8196**



Remember with St Gemma's

How you choose to remember your loved one will be as unique and special as they were, and there are many ways you can remember your loved one with St Gemma's. Making a donation in someone's memory is a very special way to celebrate their life, and your gift will help us to continue providing vital care and support for future patients and families.

Tree of Life

Our Tree of Life is a unique handmade sculpture situated in the Hospice's memory garden. You can choose how much you would like to donate, and we will arrange a hand engraved leaf to be placed on the Tree in tribute to your loved one.



Sponsor a Day of Care

Celebrate or commemorate a day that is special to you by sponsoring a day of care on the date of your choice.

MuchLoved memory pages

Consider creating an online dedication page in your loved one's name, a lasting space to remember them and invite donations in their memory. Memory pages are free and can be personalised with photos and videos, music and messages.

Light Up a Life

St Gemma's Light Up a Life offers a heartfelt way to remember loved ones during the festive period by dedicating a light on our trees in their honour. Light Up a Life culminates in two special events where we come together to celebrate those being remembered as we illuminate our trees with thousands of lights, each representing someone special.



However you would like to support St Gemma's in memory of your loved one, our Fundraising Team can provide guidance, materials and advice.

Please contact us by calling **0113 218 5555** or emailing us at **individualgiving@st-gemma.co.uk**.



329 Harrogate Road, Moortown, Leeds, LS17 6QD

 www.instagram.com/stgemmashospice

 www.facebook.com/st.g.hospice



Registered Charity No. 1015941

V3 Sept 25