



St Oswald's  
Hospice

# Bereavement Support

in the Children & Young Adults Service

Quality time for everyone

The death of a child in the family whether sudden or expected, changes everything. The way in which families make sense of and cope with their grief varies greatly. But grief is normal – and necessary – and needs to be expressed.

## **Physical Problems**

Many bereaved people feel strained and physically run down. Grief is time consuming and exhausting, both emotionally and physically.

You may experience a variety of physical symptoms, including breathlessness, exhaustion, loss of appetite or overeating, sleep problems, palpitations, loss of concentration and interest, fatigue and forgetfulness.

## **Emotions**

Even when death has been expected, it can come as a shock. Shock may leave you feeling completely numb and it may be a useful protection that gets you through the first few days. You might even find it hard to let yourself cry.

Acknowledging your feelings and expressing them is something that shouldn't be avoided for long, it is part of the healing process.

You may experience some or all of the following;

- **Guilt**
- **Panic**
- **Anxiety**
- **Anger (even with the dead person)**
- **Despair**

All of these feelings and reactions may come and go in an unpredictable way during bereavement. If any of these symptoms persist it may be advisable to speak to your GP.

## **Our Bereavement Service**

Our Bereavement Service offers support to relatives and friends during the care, and after the death, of a child at St Oswald's. Many people find it helpful to talk about their thoughts and feelings with someone who is not directly involved.

### **We can offer support to you and your family in several ways:**

- An opportunity to come back to the unit for tea and an informal chat with a member of the team. This is usually around six weeks after the death.
- Group support with other parents who have been bereaved.
- Information and advice regarding the needs of bereaved children.
- An invitation to our special Memory Day, which is usually held in June.

### **Our other Bereavement Support publications may be useful too.**

#### **Please ask a member of staff for:**

- Coping with the death of a child
- How to support your child through a death
- Advice on planning a child's funeral
- Siblings
- Dealing with grief in your teens
- Parents Bereavement group

**If you would like to talk about anything in this leaflet please contact a member of the Bereavement Team on 0191 285 0063 ext 2008.**

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## **Children and bereavement**

Children, like adults, are individuals and will grieve in a variety of ways depending on their age and maturity. They might also need extra comfort and support and may go back temporarily to earlier stages of behaviour.

Be ready to listen to their fears and anxieties at any stage and to answer any questions they have as honestly as you can. Our 'How to support your child through a death' leaflet may help. Please ask a member of staff for a copy.

## Some Useful Tips

- Don't bottle up feelings.
- Express your emotions.
- Don't avoid talking about what has happened.
- Remember that you need time to sleep, rest and think.
- Avoid making major decisions too soon.
- Don't forget that children have similar feelings and need to share in the grief.
- Be gentle with yourself. If you have a bad day, put it behind you, as tomorrow is another day.

## Useful Websites

### CRUSE

Supporting you after the death of someone close.

[www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)

### Compassionate Friends

Supporting families after a child dies.

[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

### Winston's Wish

Help for bereaved children and their families.

[www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk)

### Child Bereavement UK

Charity with information for young people who've been bereaved.

[www.childbereavementuk.org](http://www.childbereavementuk.org)

We are a registered charity and rely on voluntary donations and legacies to enable us to care for patients and families.



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