

Bereavement

When someone close dies

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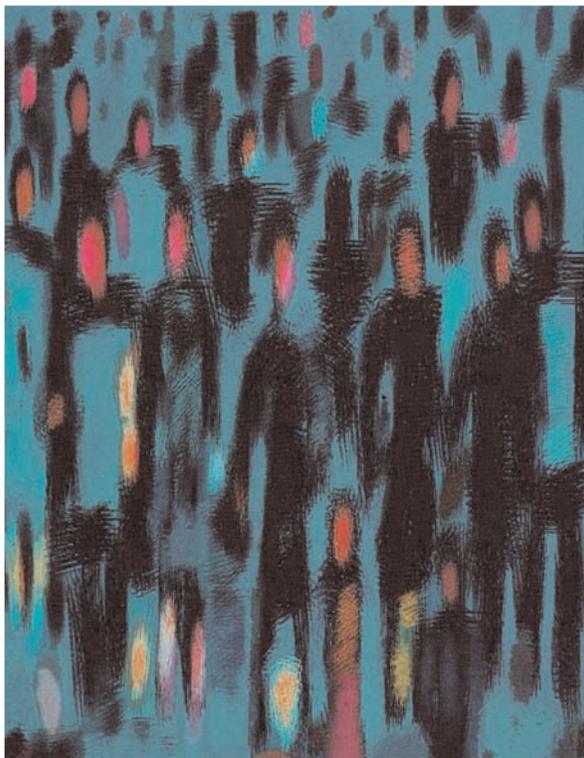
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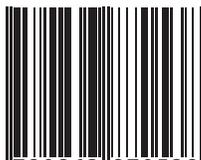
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Introduction

Your life has changed because someone close to you has died. Whether the death was sudden or expected you will feel strong and painful emotions. In the beginning your loss may be all consuming. It is the first thing that hits you each morning and you may find it hard to think about anything else. It may feel like your world has fallen apart.

You may feel now that you can't cope but as time goes on you will find that your grief comes in waves and that you have good days as well as bad days.

We hope this booklet will help you to understand what you are feeling and to find ways to cope. Part 1 will give you an idea of what to expect and answer some of the questions you may have.

Some of the stress after a death can be caused by practical concerns such as registering the death, social welfare payments and legal issues. Part 2 will help you with these matters and it will also help you to understand about post-mortems and inquests.

Part 3 has contact details for organisations and professionals you can go to for support and a list of books and websites you may find helpful.

Part 1 - Grief

What to expect when you are grieving

When someone close to you dies, grief can affect every part of your life. You may be overwhelmed and frightened by how you are feeling. You may act in ways you don't expect. You may feel physically unwell. You may wonder if you have the strength to deal with the pain and emotions you feel. Your grief may be all consuming for a long time and it is difficult to think about anything else.

There is no 'right' way to grieve and there is no set time in which you should be feeling better. Don't compare yourself to other people. Your grief is different from everyone else's, even from those around you who are grieving for the same person. Your relationship to the person who has died was unique to the two of you and so your grief for them will also be unique.

However, there are some feelings, reactions and life changes that many people go through when someone close dies. You may experience many of these. Your grief may come in waves. Every day can bring you different thoughts and feelings. It can be a very confusing time. Sometimes knowing what to expect can help you to cope.

Feelings of loss

Disbelief and shock

Your first reaction to the death may be disbelief. It is hard to take in the news that someone you love has died. You may be in shock, feel numb, confused and stunned. You may be unable to think clearly. This time can feel very unreal, almost like a bad dream. This sense of numbness and disbelief can protect you from the full impact of the death and help you to survive through the early weeks and months.

Sense of longing

You may have an intense longing to see the person who has died, to hear their voice, to hold them and to talk with them. There may be times when you feel you have seen or heard them, perhaps in a crowd or familiar place. You may find it difficult to recall their voice or picture them in your mind and this can be very upsetting.

Anxiety and fear

Feelings of anxiety and fear are natural at this time. You may feel vulnerable and alone. You may doubt your ability to cope, feel overwhelmed and a loss of control at times. You may lack trust in your own judgement, lose confidence in yourself and feel unable to make decisions. You may feel that everything is falling apart.

It can be a time where you feel insecure and unsafe. You may worry about your own health and that of others. You may fear that something else terrible could happen. Sometimes this anxiety can make you feel ill or lead to panic attacks. See page 10 to read about how your body reacts to grief.

It can be difficult to talk about these feelings but it does help to share your fears with someone you trust.

Despair

There may be times when the pain of your loss overwhelms you. You may think you can't bear it any longer and wonder will it always be like this. You might question what is left to live for and feel quite hopeless about the future. You may worry if you'll be able to cope again.

It may be difficult to eat or sleep. It may be a struggle to do everyday things, like caring for children, going to work, meeting friends and family or just thinking about anything other than the person who has died.

While you may feel that no one can understand your despair or help you cope with it, it is important to find someone to talk to. Try talking to a close friend or family member or a professional who understands bereavement (see page 62).

Anger

Anger is a natural and understandable response to being deprived of someone you really love. It is a normal expression of the upset and unfairness you feel.

You may be angry at the person who has died, perhaps for leaving you to carry on alone. Maybe you feel that they didn't take care of themselves; that their death was unnecessary and could have been prevented. You may be angry because of difficulties you had with them during their life. You may feel angry with yourself or with your family and friends or perhaps with God. You may feel anger at how others appear to be grieving. You may be angry with doctors or others who were involved at the time of the illness or death.

You may feel angry at how the person died. Perhaps the death was violent or by suicide or you feel someone was responsible.

Sometimes the force of your anger may frighten you and it may not be easy to talk about. Anger can make you irritable and intolerant of others.

You may need help to deal with your anger if:

- it becomes so intense that it preoccupies you;
- you start acting aggressively;
- you become self destructive;
- it causes problems in your relationships.

Guilt

While feelings of guilt and regret are normal, they may be hard to cope with. You may dwell on situations and times you feel guilty about. You may blame yourself for things done or not done, said or unsaid. You may only remember the times when you were not as patient or loving as you think you should have been. You need to keep in mind that all relationships have happy and unhappy times.

Guilt is particularly difficult if you feel in some way responsible for the death or feel that you could have prevented it. You may feel guilt for surviving when others have died.

Guilt can preoccupy you and you may feel depressed and anxious. You may neglect your own needs. If you are feeling like this, you need to talk to someone you trust or to a professional who can help you.

Shame

You may feel shame or embarrassment about the circumstances of the death. There may be personal, family or medical details that have now become public that cause you embarrassment and pain. You may worry about how others will react to what has happened and this can add to your distress. It can help to talk with your family about how to respond to people when faced with comments or questions that may be difficult.

Relief

You may feel relief when someone close dies because their suffering is now over. It may be that you were worried about their safety, health or future care and you don't have these concerns any longer. You may also feel some relief if your relationship with them was difficult. You may feel guilty or uncomfortable about these feelings but they are a normal part of grief.

Envy

You may envy others whose lives seem to be going on as normal. It can be difficult to spend time with some people because you are reminded of what you have lost, for example if your partner has died you may find it hard to be with other couples.

Loneliness and sadness

You may feel a deep sense of sadness, loneliness and emptiness when someone you love dies. Their death may leave a huge void in your life. After a while, friends and family start to get on with their own lives and this can be a particularly lonely time for you. It can seem that life goes on as normal for those around you while your world has been torn apart.

Some people may seem to withdraw from you, perhaps because they don't know what to say or how to help. You may feel that others don't understand what it is like for you and this can make you feel more alone. When you have lost a partner, a child or someone you shared everyday life with, feelings of loneliness can be particularly intense.

What you can do

Many of the feelings of loss can be overwhelming and difficult to cope with. Family and friends can often give the support you need but there may be times when it helps to talk to a professional who understands bereavement or with others who have had a similar loss. See page 62 for details of where you can get help.

Depression

When you are bereaved you will experience many difficult feelings and mood changes, most of which are normal in grief. Some people may also experience a deep sense of hopelessness and despair. If this happens to you and you find it difficult to function in your everyday life, it could mean that you are suffering from depression.

The symptoms of depression include:

- feelings of sadness and hopelessness that don't go away,
- no interest in yourself or others,
- not being able to cope with everyday problems,
- lack of energy,
- being very tearful or emotional,
- being irritable with people around you,
- feeling incompetent and worthless,
- problems getting to or staying asleep, disturbed sleep or sleeping too much,
- losing your appetite or overeating,
- withdrawing from people,
- anxiety or panic attacks,
- relationship problems and loss of interest in intimacy or sex,
- poor concentration and forgetfulness,
- thoughts about death and dying,
- thoughts of suicide or harming yourself.

If you have some of these symptoms and they last for a number of weeks, talk to your family doctor. You can also contact Aware or the Samaritans. It may also help to speak to a professional who understands bereavement (see page 62).

How your body reacts to grief

Grief doesn't just affect your emotions, the stress of losing someone close will also affect your body. When you are grieving, your natural resistance to illness is lower. You are more likely to feel ill or an illness you already have may flare up or get worse.

Your grief may affect you in some of the following ways:

- tiredness and exhaustion,
- crying and tearfulness,
- anxiety, nervousness, easily upset and shakiness,
- lack of energy,
- appetite changes, weight loss or gain,
- sleeping problems,
- forgetfulness and inability to concentrate,
- upset stomach, diarrhoea,
- pain or tightness in your chest,
- palpitations and shortness of breath,
- headaches and muscle aches,
- loss of interest in sex,
- changes in menstrual cycle,
- agitation, irritability and tension.

Anxiety and panic attacks

If you are having palpitations, excessive sweating, difficulty breathing or dizziness you may be having panic attacks. These are caused by severe anxiety which can be triggered by a bereavement. Your family doctor can help you find ways to cope. You may find it useful to contact Mental Health Ireland who provide support and information on coping with anxiety and panic attacks (see page 66).

What you can do

It is very important to take care of your health. Try to eat well and get enough sleep. If you are worried about any of these physical reactions, see your doctor for a health check.

Changes in your behaviour

The emotional and physical stress you are going through can make it hard to think clearly, to concentrate and to make decisions. Grief can also cause you to act in ways that worry you or those close to you.

- You may have moments when you forget that the person has died. For example, you might set their place at the table or pick up the phone to call them. You may find yourself looking out for them in a crowded place or listening out for them to come home.
- You might either avoid or be drawn to places, people or situations that remind you of the person who has died.
- Your memory may be affected and you will sometimes feel distracted and confused. For example, you may drive somewhere and not remember the journey.
- You may feel disorganised and that things are getting on top of you.
- You may find it an ordeal to complete simple tasks. It's also normal to be less motivated to do everyday things.
- As a way of coping you may immerse yourself in work or some other activity.
- You may become more impulsive or take risks, for example driving too fast, drinking too much or taking drugs.

What you can do

These changes are usually temporary reactions to your loss and will pass with time. Don't expect yourself to function as well as you usually do. You may find it difficult to make choices and it is better not to make major changes early on. Talk through decisions you need to make with someone you trust.

Alcohol and drugs

Some people may use alcohol or drugs (including some over the counter medicines) to dull their pain or to escape from their feelings of grief. However, they can make you feel worse in the long run, prolonging your grief and leading to other problems.

Heavy use may lead to addiction or dependence. Many drugs and alcohol have a depressant effect on the brain and can lead to depression. They can also give you strong feelings of hopelessness, despair and even suicidal thoughts, that you may not have had otherwise.

For these reasons you should try not to rely on alcohol and drugs to help you through your grief. If you or others are worried about your use of alcohol or drugs you should talk to your doctor.

Your spirituality and beliefs

Your spirituality, beliefs or religious faith can be a source of strength and may give you hope and comfort. They can help you understand and make sense of your loss. You may find support and guidance from your church. Many people believe in a spiritual afterlife and this helps them to maintain a bond with the person who has died.

When faced with a death, people often question their faith and what we believe. Whether or not you have a religious faith you may find that long held beliefs that once helped you to make sense of life or were a comfort in difficult times are now challenged or no longer have meaning.

It is not unusual to feel anger at God or at your church. It can add to your distress to feel such anger or to have a loss of faith, particularly if it has always been a support to you. It may help to talk with someone in your church about your thoughts and doubts.

Facing people and new situations

The support of family, friends and your community is really important at this time. Their friendship can help you feel less alone and help you to cope with day-to-day life.

There may also be times when you find it stressful to be around people. You may try to avoid meeting people. You may find it upsetting to talk about what has happened or you just don't feel like talking about it anymore. You may be tired of hearing the usual expressions of sympathy and meeting people who do not know what to say. You may feel that some people are avoiding you. This can hurt you but it may be because they don't know what to say or how to help you.

You may also find that you are left out of some social situations, for example by other couples if your partner dies. You may dread attending events such as weddings and family gatherings. You may find that you don't want to meet with friends because you are easily annoyed by them and feel they are concerned with things that now seem trivial to you.

The death of someone you love can leave you feeling vulnerable and fragile which can affect your confidence. You may think you will drive people away or that they'll get tired of listening to you. You may worry that you will burden them with your feelings. On the other hand you may find it hard to be on your own and need a lot of support and reassurance from family and friends. Your loss can be so overwhelming at times that you may have little interest in or energy for anyone else, even those closest to you.

What you can do

While it may sometimes be difficult to be with family and friends when you are grieving, try not to isolate yourself. Don't miss out on the support other people can offer. If you feel that you can't talk to the people around you, look for the company of others who may understand better what you're going through. Consider joining a bereavement group where you can meet people who are also grieving. See page 64 for information.

Returning to work

For some people going back to work can be a welcome step. It can give you a break from your grief and restore a routine. It may be the only part of your life that seems normal.

However, for many people returning to work is difficult. You may be expected to go back within a few days and this can be very stressful. It may help to speak to your employer or manager to plan your return. There may be compassionate leave available. Perhaps you can work part-time or reduced hours at first.

It may help to talk to your manager or a colleague close to you about what has happened. Tell them what you would like your other colleagues to know and how they can support you. Try not to cover up what you are going through, you may value having support in work.

Facing people at work

You may worry about being upset or ‘breaking down’ in front of your colleagues and others you meet. You may want to avoid people and their questions and words of sympathy. You may worry about how you will respond to them.

It will help to have a plan of what you might say to colleagues and others at work. It’s fine just to say thank you when people offer their sympathy. You don’t have to tell everyone the details of what happened, unless you want to. It is important that you can tell the story of your loss but be selective about who you talk to and what you tell them. Choose people you trust to be supportive and who will respect your privacy. You may be disappointed by your colleagues’ response. This may be because they do not know what to say or how best to support you.

Looking after yourself when you go back to work

Keep in mind that when you do go back to work you won't have the same energy for a while. You will be physically and emotionally drained. It may be harder to concentrate and motivate yourself. You may feel overwhelmed by tasks that you found easy before. Work may seem trivial to you and you may feel you are just going through the motions. You may lack confidence.

Sometimes the pressure of work combined with the feelings of loss can cause more distress. It is good to let those you work closely with know when things are particularly difficult for you and let them know how they can help. Try not to take on any new responsibilities at this time. Your friends and colleagues may also be a valuable source of support for you. Returning to work and getting back into a routine can be a positive step in your grief.

Finding ways to cope

The intensity of the pain you are feeling at this time can be frightening. When someone important in your life dies, you are mourning both for the person you loved and for the unfulfilled hopes and plans you shared.

Grief can absorb all your energy and affect all areas of your life. Grief can last for a long time and there is no fixed time in which you should expect to feel better. There will be times when your grief is very intense and it is difficult to cope. There will be other times when the pain subsides and you feel able to do normal things. These suggestions may help you.

- Talk about the person who has died and about how you are feeling. It's good to have one or two people you trust to confide in. Don't be afraid to show your emotions to family and friends.
- Try not to distance yourself from people who care about you. Support from family and friends will help you to cope. Don't assume they know exactly what you need. Let them know how you are feeling and what help you need from them.

- Don't expect too much of yourself. Give yourself the time to grieve. The pain of grief can come and go and you will have good and bad days.
- Don't compare yourself to others and how they have coped with their loss.
- You won't have the same energy for your children, partner, family or friends as before. You can only do your best as a parent, partner or friend and it's ok to be 'good enough' for a time.
- It may be difficult to meet all the demands of your job. it may be sometime before you have interest and energy for work. Don't expect too much of yourself. Talk with your manager or people you are close to in work and let them know how they can help you.
- Be careful not to rely on alcohol or drugs to ease the pain of grief. You should only use medication prescribed by your doctor.

If you feel you can't cope or your feelings are overwhelming, ask for help. Talk to someone you trust or a professional who understands grief (see page 62).

When death is sudden, accidental or traumatic

Sometimes a loss is so great, so sudden or in such terrible circumstances that you feel as though you won't survive what has happened. A sudden, accidental or traumatic death can devastate you and your family and shatter your world. The death may seem completely meaningless. As it does not make any sense to you, it is especially hard to accept that it has happened.

Your grief can be particularly intense when someone you love has died by suicide or murder, in an accident or following an assault, in an incident where many people have died or suddenly through natural causes.

You may feel dazed, insecure and vulnerable. The shock can overwhelm you and make you feel helpless, hopeless and loss of control. You may be frightened by how you are feeling and worry that you won't be able to cope.

In traumatic deaths the emergency services, Gardaí or media are likely to be involved. This can add to your distress. There may be intrusion into your family and you may feel very exposed. Your family's privacy may not be respected. The life and death of the person you love is publicly discussed and accounts may be inaccurate. This can cause you more pain.

What reactions to expect

Sudden death robs you of the chance to say goodbye, to finish unfinished business or prepare for the loss of someone close. It can be especially distressing if you parted badly or feel in some way responsible. The physical and emotional shock can last for a long time. As well as the normal feelings of grief, the emotions and reactions you have to cope with may be more intense.

You may feel:

- physically sick;
- helplessness, despair, depression and terror;
- anger, guilt, relief and frustration;
- unease, confusion and disorganisation;
- a need to understand what happened. A need to blame or hold someone responsible for the death. You may go over events again and again to try to understand and regain a sense of control;
- a loss of security and confidence in the world. You feel that the safe world you lived in no longer exists. You may fear for yourself, for your family and friends and become worried that something else terrible will happen. You may become overprotective of others;
- preoccupied with the person who has died. You may have distressing images of how they died or looked following the death and this can happen whether you were present at the death or not. Memories of the death and how it occurred may dominate your thoughts rather than memories of the person who died. You may worry about whether they suffered pain or distress before dying;
- you are losing control, losing your mind or going mad. You may become numb, avoid talking about the death or sometimes 'shut down' or withdraw. This can make it very hard to experience your feelings of loss and grieve for the person you love.

You may have many unanswered questions about what happened. You may be troubled by thoughts about what could have been done to protect the person or prevent their death and have a strong sense of 'what if'. If you were involved in the event yourself you may suffer from 'survivor guilt'. You may be questioning why you survived when others died or believe you could have done something to prevent the tragedy.

You may experience other reactions, such as: flashbacks to the event; nightmares; disturbed sleep; distressing images, sounds and smells; feeling very nervous and jumpy; feeling intensely angry and

short tempered; avoiding people and places that bring up painful memories or becoming withdrawn. These trauma reactions can overshadow your grief. Ask a bereavement professional or your doctor for advice and help.

When death is by suicide

If the death was by suicide you may struggle with many questions such as ‘why?’, ‘what if?’ ‘did they really mean to do it?’, ‘did I really know them?’. It is very hard to accept that there are some things you may never know the answer to. The investigation and inquest can make you feel like you are on trial. You may blame yourself or feel that others in the family blame you.

You may have feelings of rejection, shame and betrayal. You may feel anger towards the person who died or towards others. You may feel isolated and judged by your friends and the community. You may find that friends will avoid you or avoid talking about the person who died. They may behave as if the death didn’t happen. They may be afraid you will mention the suicide and they won’t know how to respond. This can make it very difficult for you to say how you feel and can leave you more isolated.

When death is by murder or violence

If the death is due to murder or violence you may have strong feelings of anger and a desire for justice. You may struggle to accept that someone has taken the life of the person you love. Trying to understand why they did this can add to your pain.

The families of murder victims can feel very isolated and alone. Other people may feel and act awkwardly with you. It is hard for them to understand what you are going through. You may feel that some people blame the victim for their own death. Some may make insensitive remarks or seem only interested in the details of what happened and not in offering you support. This can upset you even more.

Dealing with the Gardaí, coroner, media and the legal system can be distressing and overwhelming. There may be a trial and this can be very distressing and prolong your grief.

Finding ways to cope

You will find some suggestions on finding ways to cope with grief on pages 16 and 43. It is important to talk through your feelings of loss, fear and trauma. Family and friends may be able to support you with this but you may also need to get help from a bereavement counsellor (see pages 68 and 70).

It may help you to talk to someone who has been through a similar experience. There are support services for families bereaved by suicide and by murder. You will find contact information on page 69.

Telling the children

If you have been bereaved by a traumatic death, a suicide or violent death, you may not want to or feel able to talk to your children about what has happened. You may want to protect them but the story of what happened may quickly become public so it is best to be honest from the start. No matter how painful it is to explain the truth, it is better for children to hear it from a parent or other adult they trust.

It is important to tell children the basic facts about what caused the death. Use words they can understand and give them simple details at first. Children will use their imagination to fill in the gaps in the story if you do not give them an explanation. What they imagine can be more horrific and upsetting than the truth.

You could start to explain what part of the person was hurt or injured and where the person died. Don't give unnecessary information that they can't take in. Check with them that they understand what you have said and ask would they like to know more. Reassure them that they can come back to you for more information when they are ready. It is also important to give them time to say how they are feeling.

You will find more advice on helping children through grief in the section 'When children are bereaved' on page 33. There are also some books to help you with talking to your children (see page 73).

How grief affects families

After a death, families often go through an unsettling and uncertain time. Many families come together to support and comfort each other. However, it is also a stressful time and there may be disagreements and hurt feelings. Some families may find it difficult to be together or to support each other when someone close dies.

When someone in your family dies your family life can be upset and disrupted by their loss. You may grow closer to some of your family and distant from others. You may be surprised or disappointed by how others have reacted to the death or supported you in your grief. Past family difficulties and tensions can arise again. It takes time for bereaved families to adjust to all the upset and changes the death brings.

Everyone's grief is different

There are many ways of coping with grief and no one 'right way'. Each member of your family had a unique and special relationship with the person who has died so everyone is grieving their unique loss.

It can be difficult to understand how other people in your family express their grief. At a time when you may be feeling intensely sad or overwhelmed, others may seem to be coping well. They may have gone back to work and to social activities. You may feel that they are less affected by the death. You may be worried that someone isn't coping. Others may be worried about you. It can help to talk to each other about your concerns.

Communication in your family

Many families talk openly about how they are coping. Some families find this really difficult. There may be things that are not talked about easily in your family. It may be too hard to talk to each other about what has happened. You may be worried that you will burden each other and want to protect each other from how you are feeling. You may not be close to your family and find it easier to talk with friends or others. It is important to find one or two people you trust and can talk to honestly.

It is important to involve everybody, including children, when someone dies. Sometimes information, for example about the illness or the cause of death, may be kept from someone in the family. It could be that you want to protect them but leaving someone out can create tension and add to their fear and misunderstanding about what is happening. You need to give children or vulnerable family members information in a way they can understand (see ‘Helping children through grief’ on page 34).

Changing family roles

We each have different roles and responsibilities in our families. The person who has died may have been the carer, the organiser or the peacemaker in the family. They may have been the one you turned to for advice and support. It can feel like the family is falling apart without them. It takes time for families to adjust to all the changes the death brings. It can be difficult for everyone.

Roles in the family may change and you may have to take on new responsibilities. As well as grieving the person you love, you may also miss their help in everyday life. You may have to face parenting alone or arrange for the care of others. There may be financial matters to manage, decisions to be taken about your family or business and the running of your home. This can be overwhelming but if you let others know what support you need they may be able to help you.

Decisions about the family home, personal belongings, inheritance or arranging care for someone in the family should be discussed as a family. It may cause resentment and conflict if one person makes decisions without discussing them or if some family members do not help out. It is not fair to expect one person to take on all the responsibilities. Try to talk about these changes so that each of you is happy with the decisions taken.

Helping and supporting each other

- When someone in your family is bereaved, you can help by offering practical support, for example, offer to mind the children or do the shopping for them. See page 46 for ideas on helping people who are grieving.
- Try to understand and be tolerant of others in your family who are grieving differently to you or who have different ideas about how things should be done. Let others know how you feel and listen to how they are.
- Get as much support as you can to help with any new responsibilities.
- It can help for families to spend time together and talk to each other. Family gatherings and other opportunities to remember and share memories of the person are important for those left behind. They can help you to feel closer to each other and to the person who has died.
- If tension in your family is upsetting you, talk to someone outside the family or to a bereavement counsellor about what has been happening.

When a child dies

The death of a child at any age is traumatic and devastating. Parents expect their children to outlive them, so a child's death is out of keeping with the natural order of life. You may feel you have lost part of yourself when your child dies.

You will experience many of the feelings and reactions described in the section 'What to expect when you're grieving' on page 5. There are also differences in how you and your family will grieve the loss of a child and it may help you to understand these differences.

A parent's grief

The deep sadness, grief and despair you feel are almost impossible to put into words. You feel an intense pain of separation when your child dies. Your grief can take you over and leave little or no room for anything or anyone else. Everyday tasks can be almost impossible.

You lose a very special love when your child dies, the love of someone who needs you, depends on you, admires you and appreciates you. Your child has had a special and unique role in your family. Their death now leaves a huge void.

There are many painful daily reminders of your loss, mostly unseen by others, such as their empty bedroom, seeing other children going to school or hearing your son or daughter's favourite music. Meals and other family times can be very hard because of the empty space that is left in the family. If you have lost your only child, the silence of the house may be unbearable.

Feelings of loss

Shock

The sense of shock, disbelief and numbness is very intense. You may struggle for a long time with knowing that your child has died but not wanting to believe it. As time passes the death of your child becomes more real. It can be frightening to feel your grief is getting stronger. You may feel isolated and alone when others seem to expect that you should be better once the first twelve to eighteen months have passed. Don't be afraid to let family and friends know that it is still very hard for you.

Longing

Bereaved parents describe an aching and an intense yearning for their child. It can be unbearable to think that you will not see or hold your child again. You may long for the touch or smell of your child, particularly a small child. You may find that keeping a pillow, an item of clothing or other reminder can be a comfort. Spending time in a place where you feel close to your child may also help.

Guilt

Strong feelings of guilt, anger and blame are normal. You may feel guilt at not being able to protect your child, whether their death was caused by an illness or an accident. You may feel in some way responsible especially if their death was accidental or traumatic. You may feel guilty for surviving or may even wonder if you are being punished for something you did or did not do. As you begin to feel a little stronger and go back to do some of the things you enjoy, you may feel guilty that you are being disloyal to your child.

Anger

You may feel intense anger and blame if someone else was involved in your child's death, for example in an accident or an assault. You may also feel angry with your child, particularly if their death was

by suicide or where they may have contributed to their death, perhaps in an accident or through drinking or taking drugs. You may feel angry with or let down by the medical or legal system. You may also have a sense of anger which is not directed at anyone in particular but is a rage felt at the unfairness of your child's death. 'Why did it have to be my child?' is a question you may ask over and over.

If you feel you can't cope

You may experience other distressing thoughts and feelings. You may feel you are 'going out of your mind' and feel totally detached from life. You may have strong feelings of wanting to be with your child. At times you may have suicidal thoughts and this can be very frightening. If you have suicidal thoughts or overwhelming feelings of despair, hopelessness, anger or guilt, speak with your family doctor or with someone who understands parents' grief. See page 62 for a list of professionals and bereavement organisations.

Other difficult times

Social occasions can be very difficult as you are acutely aware of the gap in your family. People may be reluctant to mention your child in case they upset you and this can be hurtful. Some questions such as, 'how many children do you have?', can be difficult to answer. It may not be easy to mention that your child has died in situations where you don't know someone very well or where you don't feel comfortable. You may find that some family and friends are avoiding you and this can be painful and isolating. It may be that people feel helpless and don't know how to respond to your grief.

Coping with work can be difficult, particularly as time passes and your colleagues are less conscious of your grief. However, the routine and distraction of work may help you to have some sense of normality in your life. You may find that while at work you can put your feelings on hold but may be overcome by grief when you are alone. You may feel guilty if you get distracted from your grief. However, a temporary break from grief is healthy and can give you the energy to cope at other times.

When you lose a child, you grieve for the lost hopes and dreams you had for their future and for experiences they will miss out on, such as birthdays, starting school, moving to secondary school, having a career, getting married, having children and grandchildren. It can be particularly painful when your child's friends reach these milestones.

Couples' grief

When you lose a child you and your partner are both grieving an enormous loss. You may find it difficult to support each other because of your own grief. It may be very painful to talk to each other about your loss or how you are feeling when you are both so upset. It can be very hard to witness your partner's pain.

You may try to protect one another from your grief. You may feel that you have to be 'the strong one'. You may fear that you will upset your partner if you talk about your feelings when they seem to be having a good day.

In the same way that you each had a separate and special relationship with your child, each of you will miss different things and grieve in different ways. You will also cope with the loss of your child in a different way.

You may differ from your partner in how you express your feelings; one of you may want to talk about your child while the other may find this very difficult. One of you may look for support from others while the other may want to withdraw from people. One of you may want to visit the grave or be surrounded by photographs of your child while the other may avoid such reminders. You may notice other differences, such as how you approach returning to work and socialising, how you cope with day-to-day responsibilities or how you relate to your other children.

Many couples experience difficulties in their sexual relationship after the death of a child. You may have little energy for each other. While physical closeness may be comforting to one of you, it may be that your partner can't tolerate it. This can result in feelings of rejection, loneliness or frustration.

What you can do

The differences in how you grieve the death of your child can put a strain on your relationship. You need to understand your partner's grief as well as your own. It is important to try to talk, even when you feel like withdrawing from each other. Try to share your thoughts and feelings and understand each other's response to your loss. You will need to give each other time to grieve. It is normal for each parent to do a certain amount of grieving on their own. The death of a child can cause a crisis in some relationships and it may help to talk to a professional, (see page 62).

Differences for mothers and fathers

Bereaved fathers often believe they should 'be strong' for the rest of the family. Others may also expect this of you - you may be asked how your partner is rather than how you are. You may hide your own grief to protect your family from your sadness. It can be difficult to talk about your feelings or ask for support. As you may tend to meet friends at work, sporting events or in the pub, it may be hard for you to talk to them about how you feel. You may sometimes cope with your distress by keeping busy and by working things out on your own. It can help to talk to other fathers who have lost a child, perhaps in a bereaved fathers group. You will find contact details for support groups on page 64.

While women are more likely to talk about how they feel and may have more opportunities to do so, it can still be very difficult for mothers to express such intense grief. Despite your devastating loss you may be expected to keep the family routines going, particularly when you have other children and this can be very difficult to do. You may find it difficult to feel understood by friends or family who have not lost a child. It may help to talk to others who know what you're going through. You will find contact details for support groups on page 64.

Caring for other children

It may be very difficult for you to care for your other children. You may have little energy for them. You may be inclined to try to protect them from your grief by hiding your sadness from them. You may be over-protective to make sure nothing happens to them. It can be a struggle to keep it all going.

What you can do

Be realistic and don't expect too much of yourself. You are grieving so you will not function at the same level as before. Accept support from family and friends to help you with your children's needs. You will be better able to support your children if you take time to care for yourself. See page 34 for advice about helping children through grief.

Parenting alone

If you are parenting alone there are many extra demands and it can be difficult to care for yourself and your other children. You often have to make important decisions by yourself. You may not have someone to share your grief and to notice when you are finding it hard to cope. You may not realise that you need support or have the energy to look for it.

What you can do

It is important to let family and friends know what would help you and to accept support from them. You will be better able to look after your children if you find support for yourself.

When an adult child dies

When your child reaches adulthood you may feel a sense of relief, that you have got them safely through their early years of adolescence, education, career, marriage and so on. It is a huge blow then when your child dies and it can be very difficult to absorb that it has happened. You may feel a deep sense of unfairness for yourself and your child and feel angry that their life was cut short.

Your grief can sometimes be overlooked when an adult child dies. People sometimes forget that despite your child's age, they are still a child to you.

Your relationship with your adult child was different to when they were younger. It may have been a more equal relationship and you may have been close friends. You may have shared interests with each other. Perhaps they were a great support to you and you depended on them. You may desperately miss their company and friendship or have concerns about how you will manage without them.

If your son or daughter had a partner or children, they can be a source of comfort and support to you. However, they may also be the focus of everyone's concern and sympathy and you may feel you have to hide your grief. You may have little control over decisions about the funeral or memorial service and this can be hard to accept. There may be differences of opinion about things such as personal belongings or how grandchildren are reared. Perhaps they expect you to help to care for your grandchildren but you do not feel able to. Maybe you would like to be more involved with them but do not want to intrude or do not feel welcomed.

Some people may think that you are less affected by a death if you are an older person. Friends and neighbours may be less aware of your grief if they have not known your child. As you get older you may have less support around you and you may be coping with other losses or crises at this time.

It will help to find someone to talk to about how you are feeling. Regardless of your child's age or stage of life, you have a right to grieve for them and you should allow yourself the time to do this.

Grandparents and other family members

The death of a grandchild or other child in your family is deeply distressing. As well as grieving for the child who has died you are also upset and worried for their parents.

While you and your family try to support the parents, you may still feel quite helpless. It can help to spend time with them, to listen to them and offer them comfort. Offers of practical help can relieve a lot of stress. See page 46 for ideas on helping others through grief. Don't be afraid to talk about the child who has died. It is also important for you to take time to grieve for your grandchild, nephew, niece or cousin.

Finding ways to cope

Grieving the death of a child takes a long time and your child is never far from your thoughts. In time you will find ways to manage your grief and go on with life. As well as the suggestions in the first chapter 'What to expect when you are grieving', the following may help you to find ways to cope.

- You may come under pressure from family or friends to do things a certain way. Take time to make decisions and arrangements that are right for you, for example, about the funeral, headstone, memorial cards, your child's room, their clothes, toys and other belongings.
- You may get a lot of conflicting advice. Do what feels right for you and your family. This may be difficult at times when you are confused and are not feeling strong. Find your own way to grieve and to cope.
- Don't be afraid to let people know that it is still very hard for you, especially as time goes on and when others may assume that you are feeling better.
- It may help you to talk to a counsellor who understands parental grief or to meet with other bereaved parents and families (see page 62).

When children are bereaved

Many people worry about what to tell children and how to help them when someone close to them dies. It is important to tell them the truth but in terms they can understand. Children's understanding of death and their grief reactions depend on their age and stage of development. Even the very young often understand more than adults realise and children sense when those around them are upset. As with adults, each child will react differently to death. Children's grief differs from adults in that it is sporadic – your child may be upset one moment and a few moments later go out to play.

Children usually react to grief in the following ways.

- Physical reactions such as aches and pains, waking at night, bed-wetting, headaches, tummy aches and changes in the child's eating patterns.
- Their behaviour may also change. They may lash out or misbehave, perhaps to express anger or other feelings. They may seem indifferent at times, perhaps when their feelings are too much for them to deal with.
- Some children may try to be good all the time. They may try to take on extra responsibilities in an effort to help or protect their parents or brothers and sisters.

Children learn from adults how to deal with death. Encourage the child to talk about feelings and tell them that you are also sad. It can help to name feelings, for example by saying, "we are all very sad that Daddy has died, sometimes we feel lonely and angry".

It is ok to cry in front of children but talk to them about why you are upset as children can feel frightened or helpless when they see an adult distressed. They may be reluctant to talk about the person who has died for fear of upsetting you.

Talk about how you are and this will give them permission to talk about their feelings. Reassure them that you are ok and that you have support from other adults. This will help them to understand that they do not need to fill the role of their parent or sibling who has died.

Caring for children is demanding, especially when you are grieving. Ask for support from family, friends or professionals (see page 62) in helping yourself and your children at this time.

Helping children through grief

When should I tell the children?

Tell children as soon as possible. The best person to tell them is their parent or someone very close to them. It is difficult to predict how they will react. Some children may become very upset while others may not be emotional and ask lots of questions. Some children can withdraw and become very quiet while others may run off to be alone.

What should I tell them?

Keep explanations short and simple. Use the words ‘dead’ or ‘died’. Phrases such as ‘gone to sleep’ or ‘passed away’ are confusing for young children. They may believe that the person is alive somewhere and will come back. Equating death with sleep can confuse and frighten children.

For a younger child, it might be useful to say “Daddy was very sick. It was a big sickness, not like having a cold. The doctors and nurses could not make him better even though they tried very hard. Daddy’s body could not work anymore so he died. Being dead doesn’t hurt”. Young children need help to understand that there are different types of sickness, ‘little’ and ‘big’ sicknesses. Otherwise they may fear that all illness results in death. Your explanation will also depend on the questions they ask. You may need to repeat it a lot.

Children sometimes feel that they said or did something to cause the death. For example they may have said “I hate you” or “I wish you were dead”. Explain the cause of death and reassure them that they are not in any way responsible.

Be honest and open and listen to what they say. In this way, you will reassure them that it’s ok to talk about the death, to ask questions and to talk about their worries whenever they want to.

Why do they keep asking the same questions?

Children may ask the same questions many times over. Although this may be difficult for you, it is their way of trying to understand what has happened. Be as honest as you can. As children get older their understanding of death will change, so a child bereaved at age five will have new concerns and questions as the years go on.

Should I let them see the body?

It can help children to take in that the person has died if they can see their body. Prepare them for what to expect, where they will see the person, how they will look and reassure them that you’ll be there with them. Don’t insist that they do anything they don’t want to.

Should they be involved in the funeral?

Involving children in the funeral arrangements and services will help them feel included. Encourage each child to do something for the person who has died, for example write a letter, draw a picture or choose something special to put in the coffin. Prepare children beforehand for what is going to happen. Don’t expect them to do anything that makes them feel uncomfortable.

Is it better for the children to stay with me or to be cared for by family and friends who are less upset?

While it may be necessary for children to spend some time being cared for by family or friends, it is reassuring for them to spend as much time as possible at home with you or with someone very close to them.

How can I reassure them?

Maintain their usual routines as much as possible. The death of someone close, especially a parent, may leave children feeling insecure and worried about who will take care of them. Reassure children that you love them and will take care of them. Show them lots of affection and comfort them.

How should I deal with behaviour like bed-wetting or tantrums?

Children may react to stress by regressing to more childish behaviour such as thumb sucking and bed-wetting. Because they are feeling angry and sad they can also be aggressive or destructive. Most of these reactions are temporary. Try to be patient. Help them to understand why they are having angry outbursts and try to set limits on their behaviour. However, if you become worried about your child's behaviour, talk to a professional who can help (see page 67).

What about going back to school?

Returning to school may be particularly difficult for children. They may be worried about what people know and what to say. You can help them to prepare a simple explanation about what has happened and what to say to their friends

It can be hard to know when to send your children back to school. For most children it's ok to go back within a week or two after the funeral. They may be upset leaving you. It's good to talk to them about their return and help them to plan their first days back. Starting back with a few short days can be a good idea. Talk with the school about how they can support your child.

Older children are very conscious of how their friends see them and when someone in their family dies they can feel very different from other children. Talk with your child regularly about how they are finding school. Sometimes they can be teased or hurt. Their concentration may also be affected because of the upset and changes they are coping with.

Keep in touch with the school about how your child is managing. Ask the teachers help to support your child and to watch out for signs of distress or bullying.

Where can I get help for my child?

Your child may need extra support and some organisations offer help for children (see page 67). There are also books for carers, parents and children which you may find useful (see pages 73 and 74).

What to expect when children are grieving

0 - 2 years

While babies and toddlers do not understand death, they will sense a difference when a parent or someone very close to them is gone. They may become cranky and clingy. They may be fretful, cry a lot or become subdued.

What you can do

Younger children will react both to the separation from the person who has died and to changes in their normal routines. They will feel more secure if you keep their routines, such as mealtimes and bedtimes as normal as possible. They should be cared for by people they know and trust. Plenty of cuddles, comfort and familiar toys are also important.

2 - 5 years

Children of this age cannot fully understand the permanence of death and often think it is reversible. They may confuse being dead with sleeping or being away. They may search for the person who has died. They may keep asking questions such as ‘when is daddy coming home?’, even when you have explained that when someone dies they are gone forever. They need to hear the same information over and over to help them understand the death.

Younger children may feel that they said or did something to cause the death. They need short, simple explanations of what caused the death and reassurance that they are not to blame.

Children of this age are very sensitive to separations from family. Even short ones can distress them as they don’t have a developed sense of time. They do not have the words to explain what they are feeling. They may become clingy, withdrawn or express their upset through tantrums or regressive behaviour such as bed-wetting or wanting a bottle or soother again.

What you can do

Talk to your children about their worries and feelings. It may help to read simple story books about death (there is a list of books on page 74), start a memory box or use painting or drawing to help them express how they feel. Keeping their usual rules and routines such as bedtimes and mealtimes is important. If they attend a pre-school or crèche talk to the staff about how your child is doing. They need extra affection and cuddles to help them feel secure.

5 - 8 years

From about the age of five, children begin to understand more about death. They can understand that it is permanent and that the person is not coming back. They can be very curious and may be particularly interested in details such as the cause of death and what happens when the person is buried or cremated. They may ask very direct questions about death, the body, the coffin and so on. However, they can be confused by more abstract ideas such as 'life after death'. They may assume that the person can still think and feel and need you to explain that this stops when a person dies.

As children of this age have very active imaginations, it is important to explain the cause of death in terms they can understand. As with younger children, you should use the words 'dead' and 'died'. Avoid phrases such as 'gone away' or 'passed away'. See also page 21 "Telling the children".

At this age a child may find it hard to believe someone has died and act as if nothing has happened. This can be their way of coping with strong feelings. They may become withdrawn, aggressive or prone to tantrums. They may have disturbing dreams or nightmares. They may complain of headaches or tummy aches.

What you can do

Encourage them to be involved in the funeral or remembrance service. Talk about the person with them, share memories and let them know that you also miss the person who has died. Children mainly express their grief through play and activities rather than through talking. It may help them to make scrap books, photo albums and memory boxes. It may also help to paint, write letters or stories, visit the grave or go to a special place they shared with the person who died. As with younger children they will feel more secure in their normal routines and need to be reassured.

8 - 12 years

Children at this age understand the finality of death and that it happens to everyone. They are also more aware of the long term consequences of their loss and will think about the future. They will have questions about what caused the death. They need honest and clear information otherwise they may fill in the gaps from their imagination. Their ideas about what has happened may be far worse than the reality.

They may worry about their own death and the death of others close to them. If they have lost a parent they will be especially worried about their other parent. This can leave them feeling unsafe and insecure and may cause separation anxiety, for example a reluctance to leave you to go to school. They may also be very protective towards you. Reassure them that you are ok and that they don't need to mind you or worry about you. If your children are worried about who would care for them if something happened to you, talk to them about arrangements you have made.

At this age, children can feel very different to their friends when someone in their family dies and they will wonder why it had to happen to them. This can make them feel angry and they may take it out on the people who are closest to them. It can be very hard for you to deal with this when you are also feeling vulnerable. Allow children to express their anger but you need to put limits on their behaviour to make sure they do not harm themselves or anyone else.

What you can do

It can be hard for children of this age to talk about their feelings and worries. Let them know that you are happy to listen to them whenever they are ready to talk. Others in the family can also help by spending time with your child which will also give you a break.

Teenagers

Adolescence can be a difficult time for young people and coping with death can be particularly demanding at this age. They may have the same grief reactions as adults: shock, sadness, loneliness, anger. They may feel deserted and long for the person who has died, but may find it harder to express these feelings than adults. Teenagers may feel guilt and regret, particularly if they had been in conflict with the parent or sibling who has died.

They may express anger by shouting or hitting out, usually at parents or brothers and sisters. Younger teenagers may regress to more childish behaviour, like wanting to stay at home more, so as to feel secure. On the other hand they may try to be very grown up or act like they can cope alone.

Teenagers may feel that they have to take on a more adult role, like caring for you or for younger children. Don't burden them with too many responsibilities or expect them to take on the role of the person who has died, for example by telling them 'you're the man of the house now'. Allow teenagers to help a certain amount as it may help them feel more involved or in control.

It can be hard to tell grief from normal adolescent behaviour. Teenagers may become withdrawn, stay in their room or sleep a lot. They may not spend much time at home. They may start taking risks such as using alcohol or drugs or engaging in sexual activity.

Peer group is very important at this age. Friends are often the main source of emotional support for teenagers. Girls are more likely to seek emotional support from friends but it may be harder for boys to talk about their feelings. Many young people cope by keeping themselves busy in school, sport, music or other interests.

What you can do

Young people can and do cope with bereavement. The experience of death can add to their natural tendency to question the meaning of life. Listen to them and encourage them to talk about their feelings. Reassure them that you will all get through this difficult time. Respect their feelings and wishes by keeping them informed and including them in funeral arrangements or other decisions.

Give them space to grieve in their own way. They may not want sympathy but let them know that you're there when they need you. Reassure them that if they'd like to talk to someone else you'll help them to find someone they can trust. They also need to know that they still have to stick to the limits and rules you have set.

If you are concerned about your teenager's behaviour you should talk to them about what is worrying you. If teenagers need extra support suggest that they talk to someone outside the family. They may not want to go to counselling but encourage them to attend a couple of times to see what they think. They may be more open to the idea if other family members are also attending counselling. If you think they need more help, talk to their school, your family doctor or a bereavement service (see page 62).

Coping with your grief as time goes on

Finding ways to cope

- Don't take on too many new responsibilities. Share them with other people if you can. Don't make major changes in your life during this time. If you need to make an important decision, discuss it with someone you trust.
- You may feel closer to the person who has died by keeping things that remind you of them, by visiting their grave or other special places or remembering them with family and friends.
- Take your time when making decisions about what to do with clothes, jewellery, photographs, books and other personal belongings. It may help you to involve family or friends when making these decisions.
- There are many books available which may help you understand what you are going through (see page 71).
- It may help to write about your thoughts and feelings.
- If you find it difficult to talk to the people closest to you it could help to talk to others who have been bereaved, to attend counselling or join a bereavement group (see page 62).
- Allow yourself to have happy times with your family and friends. It is important to get some release from the pain and upset you feel. Plan things you enjoy and that you can look forward to.
- Birthdays, anniversaries and other family occasions can be especially painful. You may dread these occasions as they approach or feel very down in the days or weeks afterwards. It can help to plan something for the day or to spend it with people close to you.

- Take time for yourself. Do things you enjoy. Don't be afraid to say no to things you don't feel up to. Get plenty of rest and try to eat well. Exercise can help to work off stress and may help you to sleep.
- You and your family may wish to remember and celebrate the life of the person in the months and years following their death. There are many ways to express your grief and mark the importance in your life of the person who has died, such as:
 - month's mind and anniversary services;
 - birthday and anniversary notices in the newspaper;
 - holding an event in honour of the person; or
 - dedicating a sporting trophy or other memorial to them.

Hope for the future

The death of someone close can touch all areas of your life. It causes deep pain and distress to live without someone who has been important to you. Whether your relationship was happy or difficult you will still experience strong feelings and grieve for your loss.

Grieving is a process where you have to experience and cope with the pain of loss. You have to adapt to a new life and a new world without someone you love. You will move back and forth between times when you feel overwhelmed by your grief and times when you feel more able for everyday life.

Sometimes you may feel detached from those around you. You may feel lost. You may long to have the person back with you. At first they are on your mind all of the time and most of your energy is absorbed by your loss. You may have little energy for other people or commitments, no matter how important they are to you.

Gradually, you will have more interest in those people and areas of your life that you value and enjoy. This does not mean you love the person who has died any less. They will remain an important

part of your life and you will always have a bond with them. Your relationship with them has changed but not ended. You can continue to express it in many ways, for example you can:

- remember times you shared with them and the closeness between you,
- keep belongings that were special to the person or spend time in places that were special for you both,
- share memories with other people who loved them or who care for you,
- have memorial ceremonies or events and remember them at family occasions,
- continue to care for the things they cared about,
- get involved in support groups, voluntary work, fundraising or other activity in memory of the person who died,
- consider their ideas and beliefs as you face decisions,
- draw on their love for you as a source of strength.

The person who has died may have influenced you in many ways, your values, beliefs, your likes and dislikes. They may have introduced you to interests and ideas. You carry forward what they have given to you. This can help you feel close to them and pay tribute to their importance in your life.

A happy future can be difficult to imagine when someone you love has died. There will always be times when you feel sadness but the intense feelings of the early days will lessen and change over time. There may be people or things in your life that become increasingly important to you and provide some enjoyment and release from your grief. You may notice small but positive changes in how you are coping and this can be encouraging. These gradual changes can help you to find a purpose for living and hope for the future.

How to help when someone is bereaved

A person who has been bereaved needs those close to them to listen, to spend time with them, to be willing to help and support them. It's important that they feel loved and cared for. They will grieve in their own way and you should not judge them.

You may feel helpless and unsure of what to say or do to support them. You might think that someone else is better placed to comfort them but many of their friends may also feel like this and there is a risk that they become isolated. You don't have to know the 'right thing' to say. It will help to just be there, to listen or to help in practical ways.

Keep in contact with them. If you can't get to see them, phone, send a card or make some contact. Let them know that you are there if they need you.

What can I say?

Just acknowledge that this is a very difficult time for them. Don't use clichés such as 'you have an angel in heaven now' or 'he was a great age'. It's ok to tell them that you don't know what to say that would help them.

It is hard to know what to say when they ask 'why did this happen?' This is usually an expression of their pain rather than a question you have to answer. It's ok to say 'I don't know'.

How can I help?

Help them in practical ways. Offer to do the shopping, cooking, housework or collect the children from school. These everyday tasks can be overwhelming when you are grieving. This kind of help is often offered in the early days and weeks but it may be

appreciated and needed for much longer. Make a suggestion, such as ‘I can mind the children while you go out, would that help?’, rather than ‘let me know if there is anything I can do’. When people are grieving, it is often difficult for them to ask for help.

Listen

Most people who have been bereaved want to talk about the person who has died. Let them talk. Don’t change the subject or avoid mentioning the person’s name. Listen to them. Don’t assume that you know how they feel. Allow them to be upset. Don’t try to reassure them too quickly with how you or others have coped with a loss.

If they are feeling anger or guilt, let them talk about it. These are difficult feelings to bear and it helps to express them. Don’t dismiss their feelings. They may be angry and frustrated at times and are likely to take this out on the people closest to them. Try to make allowances for this.

As time goes on

The bereaved person may also need privacy and time on their own. There may be times when they would prefer to do things for themselves and other times when they may appreciate your help.

Grief comes in waves so expect them to have good and bad days. On good days they will want to get on with life as normal and on bad days they will need extra care and understanding. Don’t assume that a good day means that they are ‘over it’ and don’t need your help anymore. They may have to take on new roles and responsibilities. These may be too much for one person and they may need ongoing support.

In the months after the death, the day-to-day life of family and friends goes back to normal. But the bereaved person may only now begin to feel the full extent of their loss. Be patient and continue to support them. Grieving takes a long time.

Part 2 - What you need to know

When someone you love has died, the last thing you might want to do is deal with practical matters. Unfortunately there are things that will arise in the days and weeks after the death and this can be stressful. The support of a family member or friend will help you to deal with these.

Don't rush to make decisions. Talk them through with someone you trust. Perhaps you are finding it hard to take it all in and they are able to think more clearly at this time.

The Citizens Information Board produce a very useful booklet 'Information for those affected by Bereavement'. This has information on financial, legal and tax issues and where to go to get support and information on these matters.

Get this booklet and additional help from your local Citizens Information Centre. See the phone book for your local CIC or visit www.citizensinformationboard.ie. You can find information about state services and benefits you may be entitled to at www.oasis.gov.ie.

About money matters

How will I pay for the funeral?

Funerals can be expensive. If you are on a low income and you cannot meet the expenses of the funeral you may be able to get help with the cost.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance payments are made by the

Health Service Executive (formerly the Health Board). These payments are means-tested, which means that you will have to give proof of your income.

They can be paid while you are waiting for a decision on a social welfare payment, such as widow's pension or one parent family payment. They are usually paid on a one-off or weekly basis.

The following payments are available:

- Exceptional needs payment to help with the costs of the funeral and burial,
- Supplements to help with living expenses, rent and mortgage interest repayments, travel or other expenses.

How to apply

You can apply to the Community Welfare Officer (CWO) at your local health centre.

What will I live on?

If your spouse or partner has just died you may be worried about money. You may have to give up work to care for your children or a relative. You may now be living alone for the first time and wonder how you will manage. You may be entitled to a social welfare payment.

To qualify for some payments, for example contributory pensions, you will need to have a certain amount of PRSI contributions. You will need the death certificate (or the death notice from the newspaper) to apply for these payments. If the person who has died was receiving a social welfare payment, it may continue for six weeks after the death.

Short-term payments include:

- Bereavement grant
- Funeral grant (under the Occupational Injuries Benefit scheme)
- Widowed parent grant

Long-term payments may include:

- Widow / widower's (contributory) pension
- Widow / widower's (non-contributory) pension
- One parent family payment
- Widow / widower's pension under the Occupational Injuries Benefit scheme
- Orphan's contributory and non-contributory pension
- Living alone allowance.

How to apply

You can request leaflets and application forms from:

- The Department of Social and Family Affairs,
Lo-Call: 1890 20 23 25
- www.welfare.ie
- your local social welfare office
- the post office.

More information

The booklet "Information for those affected by Bereavement" from The Citizens information Board (see page 70) will have more information about these and other money matters such as insurance policies, mortgage protection and tax issues.

About post-mortems, the coroner and inquests

Post-mortems

Following some deaths, a post-mortem (also called an autopsy) is carried out to find the cause of the death. You may be concerned about this but a post mortem is carried out with respect for the dignity of the person who has died. The results may help you to understand how the person died and to come to terms with the death. It will not usually delay the funeral. There are two types of post-mortem, a non-coroner's post mortem and a coroner's post mortem.

What is a non-coroner's post mortem?

When the hospital consultant or the family would like to know more about the illness that caused the person's death a non-coroner's post mortem may be carried out. This is only carried out with your consent as next of kin. You may have to wait 3-8 weeks for the results. You should discuss these with the consultant who was treating the person who died or with your family doctor. When the doctor has the post-mortem results, they can sign the Medical Certificate of the Cause of Death. You can then apply for the death certificate in the usual way (see page 55).

What is a coroner's post-mortem?

The coroner is an independent public officer. All coroners are doctors. The role of the coroner is to look into the circumstances of sudden, unexplained or violent deaths. The coroner decides whether a post mortem should take place based on the information they have about the death.

Once the coroner has decided that a post-mortem is needed, then it must be carried out. The coroner does not need your consent but you will be told if a post-mortem is to happen.

There are certain deaths that must be notified to the coroner, such as:

- Sudden and unexpected deaths;
- When the GP or hospital doctor is uncertain about the cause of death and so is not able to issue a Medical Certificate of the Cause of Death;
- Accidental or violent deaths (for example falls or road traffic accidents);
- Deaths that occur within 24 hours of hospital admission;
- Deaths that occur within 24 hours of any medical, surgical or other procedure.

If a coroner's post-mortem is to happen, you or another member of the family will be asked to formally identify the person who has died with a garda present. This is to help the coroner and does not mean that the death is considered suspicious.

What is organ retention?

During a post-mortem it is possible that organs, parts of organs or tissue may be kept for further tests to help identify the cause of death. Each hospital has its own procedures about how they will inform you of this. If organs are retained, someone in the hospital should talk to you about your wishes for the burial of the organs.

You may find it very distressing to deal with these issues. It is important to talk with the hospital or your family doctor so you understand what is happening and why.

When can I get a death certificate?

When the coroner has ordered a post-mortem, the hospital cannot give you any information about the cause of death. You cannot get the death certificate until the post-mortem results are available. This can take several weeks or months. You can get an Interim Certificate as to the Fact of Death from the coroner's office. This is usually enough for social welfare and some other financial matters where proof of death is needed. Contact the local coroner's office to get as much information as possible. You can get the coroner's name and contact details from the hospital or your local council.

Why is the coroner holding an inquest?

The purpose of an inquest is to establish the circumstances and cause of the death. Any witnesses, such as gardaí, medical personnel or others who were present at the death may be asked to attend and give sworn evidence. The earliest an inquest can take place is six weeks after the death. However, it may be several months or a year before an inquest takes place.

An inquest does not decide blame or innocence in relation to the cause of death. It is an enquiry presided over by the coroner. There may or may not be a jury. You may have a solicitor present who can question any witnesses on your behalf. The inquest may be postponed if there is to be a criminal case relating to the death.

After the inquest, the coroner's office will arrange to register the death and you can then obtain the death certificate in the usual way (see page 55). Once the inquest is over you can get a copy of the post-mortem report from the coroner's office. Because the report will contain very explicit medical details from the post-mortem, you should go through it with your GP or hospital doctor.

Will there always be an inquest?

If the coroner's post mortem shows that the death is due to natural causes there is no need for an inquest. The coroner's office will arrange to register the death and you will be able to get the death certificate in the usual way. This will not be the case if there is to be an inquest.

The emotional impact of an inquest

An inquest can be a very difficult experience for your family. It may bring up many painful feelings and memories. You will hear details of what happened at the time of the death that may be distressing for you. Attending the inquest may help to answer some of your questions about the death. However some questions may remain unanswered and this can be very difficult. You should bring a family member or close friend for support.

Where can I get more information?

An information booklet 'The Role of the Coroner in Death Investigation' is available from Dublin City Coroner's Court, Store Street, Dublin 1. Tel: (01) 874 6684. It is also available online at www.coronerdublincity.ie.

About registering the death

You should register the death as soon as possible and no later than three months afterwards. You must register the death with a Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages. Your local Health Service Executive office (formerly the Health Board) will tell you where your nearest registrar is, or you can find it in the phone book.

Who can register the death?

A death can be registered by a family member who has all the information needed. If no relatives can be found or if they all live abroad, are ill or do not have the necessary information then the death may also be registered by:

- any person present at the death,
- any other person who has the information needed,
- any person who was in the same residence when the person died at home,
- a member of staff at the hospital or other institution where the person died,
- a person who found the body of the person concerned,
- a person who took charge of the body,
- the person who arranged the burial of the body, or
- any other person who has knowledge of the death.

What information will I need to register the death?

You will need the following information about the person who has died:

- the date and place of death;
- their place of birth;
- their gender (male/female);
- their first name(s), surname, birth surname and address;
- their personal public service number (PPSN, formerly RSI number);
- their marital status;
- their date of birth or their age last birthday;
- their profession or occupation (job or trade);
- if they were married, the profession or occupation of their spouse;
- if they were less than 18 years old, the occupation(s) of their parent(s) or guardian(s);
- their father's name(s) and birth surname;
- their mother's name(s) and birth surname;

The person registering the death will also have to give their first name(s), surname, address and signature. You must also state why you are qualified to register the death.

What do I need to register the death?

The doctor will give you a Medical Certificate of the Cause of Death. Bring the certificate to the Registration Office and sign the register of death in the presence of the registrar. The registrar will issue the death certificate.

There is no charge for registering a death but you will have to pay for the death certificate. The current charges will be on display in the Registration Office.

What if there is to be an inquest or a coroner's post-mortem?

When a coroner's post-mortem is carried out neither your family doctor nor the hospital doctor will be able to sign the Medical Certificate of the Cause of Death. As a result there will be a delay in getting the death certificate. You can get an Interim Certificate as to the Fact of Death from the coroner's office. This is usually enough for social welfare and some other financial matters where proof of death is needed.

Once the coroner determines the cause of death, they will register the death with the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages and you will then be able to get a death certificate. See page 51 for more information on the coroner and post mortems.

Registering a stillborn baby

All stillborn babies can be registered regardless of when they were born. You can get information on registering a stillborn baby from your maternity hospital or from your local registrar. The General Register Office has information on registering stillbirths at www.groireland.ie.

Registering a death after 12 months

Deaths referred to the coroner do not have a time limit to be registered. Otherwise, if you have not registered within twelve months, it must be approved by the Superintendent Registrar for the area.

About legal matters

This section provides some basic information about legal issues that may arise after a death. You should seek legal advice for your individual situation.

Explanation of legal terms

A person who makes a will is a **testator**.

A person who dies without a will is said to have died **intestate**. This means that the person's property and money will be distributed according to the law.

The **estate** or **assets** describe the person's belongings - including property, money, personal belongings - that have to be distributed after their death.

An **executor** is a person named in a will who carries out the terms of the will. There may be more than one executor. The executor may be a beneficiary under the will.

A **beneficiary** is a person named in the will who receives money or property from the estate.

An **administrator** is a person who administers the will if no executors have been appointed or who administers the estate if there is no will.

A **legacy** (or bequest) is a gift made in a will.

Probate is the process by which a will is put into effect.

Wills

Try to find out if the person who has died made a will. If it is not kept at home, the will is usually with the person's solicitor or in their bank for safekeeping.

When they have left a will

Usually a will names one or more people to act as executors. The executor generally carries out the wishes of the person who has died. The first thing an executor needs to do is get a Grant of Probate. The Grant of Probate is the document that gives the executor the legal authority to administer the estate, that means settle outstanding debts and distribute the assets. You can either contact a solicitor or the Probate Office directly about getting a Grant of Probate.

When they have not left a will

A person is said to have died 'intestate' when they have left no will. It may be necessary for you to take out Letters of Administration. These give the next of kin (closest family member) the same legal authority as the Grant of Probate. You can either contact a solicitor or the Probate Office directly about getting a Grant of Probate.

House and land

If a house or land has been left to you or if the title for the house has to be transferred to your name you will need a Deed of Assent. You should probably ask a solicitor to help you with this.

If you do not transfer the title you will not become the legal owner. You may have serious problems if you want to sell the property in the future or leave it to someone else in your will.

For more information about wills, deeds and probate, contact:

The Probate Office
1st floor,
15/24 Phoenix Street North
Smithfield
Dublin 7
Tel: 01 888 6174 or 01 888 6728
www.courts.ie

The booklet ‘Information for those affected by Bereavement’ provides comprehensive information on all legal matters following a death. This information is also available from the www.citizensinformationboard.ie.

Guardianship of children

When the parents are married to each other

Married parents are joint guardians of their children. You each have the same duties and rights regarding your children’s welfare. You have the right to choose who you wish to be guardian to your children in the event of your death. When one parent dies, the surviving parent usually becomes sole guardian of the children.

If the parent who has died appointed a person to act as a guardian in the event of their death, they act jointly with the surviving parent in making decisions about the child’s welfare. Guardians appointed by deed or will are known as testamentary guardians. In some instances, the court may appoint a guardian to act jointly with the surviving parent.

When both parents die without appointing guardians, any person may apply to the court to be appointed guardian. This will most likely be the child’s nearest relative. The courts can consider the wishes of children over the age of twelve, if this is appropriate, regarding who should be their guardian.

When the parents are not married to each other

Where the parents of a child are not married to each other, the mother has automatic sole guardianship.

However, where the mother agrees, the father can become a joint guardian by signing a statutory declaration in the presence of a Peace Commissioner, a Commissioner for Oaths or a Notary Public. At present there is no where you can register the declaration. You should keep copies and put the original in a safe place.

The statutory declaration form (S.I No. 5 of 1998) is available from: The Government Publications Office Tel: 01 671 0309 or Treoir Tel: 01 670 0120 www.treoir.ie.

Where the mother does not agree to the father becoming a guardian he can apply to the district court to become a joint guardian. He can do this even if his name is not on the birth certificate. The court must act in the best interest of the child when making its decision.

The mother may appoint testamentary guardians. The father may only do this if he is a guardian himself. If the mother dies, the father does not automatically become a guardian but he may apply to the court to be appointed as a guardian.

Part 3 - Bereavement support

Many people survive the death of someone close with the help of their family and friends. You may have times when this is not enough and you need to look for outside help.

In this section we outline where you may be able to find counselling and support. We give contact details for some services and support groups. There is also a booklist and a list of websites you may find useful.

The services listed here are only some of the bereavement services available throughout the country. Your family doctor, public health nurse, hospital or parish may be able to put you in touch with a local service.

Voluntary bereavement services

These are professional counselling services for which there is little or no charge. For example: the Bereavement Counselling Service, Barnardos (see page 67).

Support groups and organisations

These are organisations dedicated to supporting people who have suffered a particular illness, loss or bereavement, for example: the Irish Sudden Infant Death Association. Some are run by volunteers who themselves have been bereaved and some may also have trained therapists providing support and counselling.

Family resource centres

Many family centres throughout the country provide a range of support services and may offer bereavement counselling. You can find more information at www.frcnf.com.

Hospitals and hospices

The social work departments of hospitals and hospices usually offer bereavement support and counselling.

Health Services Executive (HSE)

Your local HSE office (health board) may provide a bereavement service and the community mental health team may also offer counselling.

Telephone numbers for hospitals, hospices and HSE offices are listed in the phone book.

Private counsellors and psychotherapists

The Irish Association for Counselling and Therapy has a directory of private counsellors. Tel: 01 230 0061 or www.irish-counselling.ie.

The Irish Council for Psychotherapy publishes a directory of psychotherapists working in private practice and in the health services. Tel: 01 272 2105

Colleges and education centres

Many colleges have student counselling services and some have bereavement groups. See college websites for further information. For example;

Trinity College Dublin: www.tcd.ie/student_services

NUI Galway: www.nuigalway.ie/student_services

Dublin Institute of Technology: www.dit.ie

Counselling services and support organisations

The Bereavement Counselling Service

Dublin Street

Baldoyle

Dublin 13

Tel: 01 839 1766 (Mon – Fri 9.15am to 1pm)

Web: www.bereavementireland.org

Counselling is available in several parts of Dublin, Carlow, Kildare and Wicklow.

Bethany Bereavement Support Groups

Tel: 01 494 3142

Web: www.bethany.ie

Parish-based support groups in many areas. Check the website to find your local group.

Beginning Experience

Tel: 01 679 0556

Offers group support programmes and weekend courses for those who have lost their spouse through death, separation or divorce. Groups are available in many parts of the country.

Irish Sudden Infant Death Association

Carmichael House

North Brunswick Street

Dublin 7

Tel: 01 873 2711

Helpline: 1850 391 391

Web: www.carmichaelcentre.ie/isida

Support organisation with branches throughout the country for parents bereaved by sudden infant death (cot death).

The Miscarriage Association of Ireland

Carmichael House

North Brunswick Street

Dublin 7

Tel: 01 872 5550

Web: www.miscarriage.ie

Provides support and information after a miscarriage.

Irish Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Association

Carmichael House

North Brunswick Street

Dublin 7

Tel: 01 872 6996

Web: www.isands.ie

This is an organisation that befriends and offers support to those who have experienced the loss of a baby around the time of birth.

Sudden Cardiac Death

CRY – Cardiac Risk in Young

Riverside One

Sir John Rogersons Quay

Dublin 2

Tel: 01 839 5438

Web: www.cry.ie

Offers counselling and support to those bereaved by sudden cardiac death.

Meningitis Trust

Tel: 01 2762050

Web: www.meningitis-trust.ie

Offers support and counselling to those who have been bereaved by meningitis or meningococcal disease.

Aware

72 Lower Leeson Street

Dublin 2

Tel: lo-call 1890 303 302

Web: www.aware.ie

A non-directive listening service, provides information about depression.

Samaritans

Tel: lo-call 1850 60 90 90

Northern Ireland helpline: 08457 90 90 90

Email: jo@samaritans.org

Web: www.samaritans.org

24 hour helpline for people in crisis.

Mental Health Ireland

Mensana House

6 Adelaide Street

Dun Laoghaire

Co. Dublin

Tel: 01 284 1166

Web: www.mentalhealthireland.ie

Offers support and information on mental health issues such as stress, panic attacks, depression and addictions.

Children

Sólás – Child Bereavement Counselling

Helpline: 01 473 2110 (Mon – Fri 10am to 12pm)

Web: www.barnardos.ie

Barnardos – Dublin

Christchurch Square

Dublin 8

Tel: 01 453 0355

Email: bereavement@barnardos.ie

Barnardos – Cork

18 St Patricks Hill

Cork

Tel: 021 455 2100

Email: bereavement@cork.barnardos.ie

This national bereavement counselling service is specifically for children. It provides information and advice through its helpline and counselling for bereaved children.

Teen Counselling Crosscare

The Red House, Clonliffe Road, Dublin 3

Tel: 01 836 0011

Web: www.crosscare.ie/teencounselling

Email: info@crosscare.ie

This counselling service is for 12 – 18 year olds. It offers bereavement counselling to young people and their families.

Counselling is available at a number of centres in Dublin.

Rainbows Ireland

Loreto Centre

Crumlin Road

Dublin 12

Tel: 01 473 4175

A support group programme for children and young adults of bereaved or separated families. Groups run throughout the country.

Barretstown Camp

Barretstown Castle

Ballymore Eustace

Co. Kildare

Tel: 045 864 115

Web: www.barretstown.org

Runs weekend camps for bereaved parents and siblings.

Suicide

Irish Friends of the Suicide Bereaved

Planning Office

St Finbarrs Hospital

Douglas

Cork

Tel: 021 431 6722

Runs support groups for those bereaved by suicide. Bereavement courses are also available.

Living Links

McDonagh house

Dublin Road

Nenagh

Co. Tipperary

Tel: 087 412 2052

Web: www.livinglinks.ie

Provides practical help, advice and support to people bereaved by suicide. A suicide out watch service is available (see website for locations and contact details).

Console – Living with suicide

All Hallows College

Gracepark Road

Drumcondra

Dublin 9

Tel: lo-call helpline 1800 201 890 (Mon – Fri 9am to 5pm)

Tel: 01 857 4300

Web: www.console.ie

Individual and group counselling in Dublin and Galway. Can advise on support services in other parts of the country.

National Suicide Bereavement Support Network

PO Box 1

Youghal

Co. Cork

Web: www.nbsbn.org

Provides contact numbers for suicide bereavement support groups and counselling services throughout the country.

Homicide

AdVic – Advocates for Victims of Homicide

PO Box 10106

Swords

Co. Dublin

Tel: 086 127 2156

Web: www.advic.ie

Brings together families bereaved by murder, manslaughter and fatal assault.

Information Services

Citizens Information Centres

There are Citizens Information Centres throughout the country. They can give you information about issues related to death and bereavement. To find your local centre:

- look up the phone book
- lo-call: 1890 777 121
- www.citizensinformationboard.ie

Citizens Information Board

Hume House

Dublin 4

Tel: 01 605 9000

Web: www.citizensinformationboard.ie

The Citizens Information Board publishes a booklet called *Bereavement: Information for those affected by Bereavement*. It contains comprehensive information about the financial, social welfare, tax and legal issues that you may have to deal with.

Books and resources

Your local library or bookshop may be able to order books for you. The Irish Hospice Foundation has a bereavement library and you may be able to borrow books. Tel: 01 679 3188.

General

Irish Stories of Loss and Hope 2007, edited by Dr. Susan Delaney, The Irish Hospice Foundation.

Grieving: A Beginner's Guide 2006, Jerusha Hull McCormack, Darton, Longman & Todd. Helpful for the newly bereaved.

Through Grief: The Bereavement Journey 1999, Elizabeth Collick, Darton, Longman & Todd.

You'll Get Over It – The Rage of Bereavement 1997, Virginia Ironside, Penguin. Addresses anger.

Living After a Death 2000, Mary Paula Walsh, Veritas.

Facing Grief: Bereavement and the Young Adult 2003, Susan Wallbank, Lutterworth Press. Aimed at young adults in the 18+ age group who are coping with the loss of a family member or friend.

Living When a Loved One has Died 1995, Earl A. Grollman. Beacon Press easy to read series of reflections on different themes related to grieving.

Spouse or partner

The Courage to Grieve 1997, Judy Tatelbaum, Vermilion.

Secret Flowers: Mourning and the Adaptation to Loss 1998, Mary Jones, The Women's Press.

A Grief Observed 1961, C. S. Lewis, London: Faber and Faber Ltd.

A Man's Grief: Death of a Spouse 2002, Colin Thatcher, Pan Macmillan. Written after the sudden death of the author's wife.

Diary of a Grief 1998, Peter Woods, William Sessions. Written following the death of the author's wife after 53 years of marriage.

The Empty Bed - Bereavement and the Loss of Love 1992, Susan Wallbank, Darton, Longman and Todd. Explores the loss of love and sexuality after the death of a partner. Includes discussion relevant to younger, older, gay and straight, married and not married couples.

Gay Widowers: Life after the Death of a Partner 1997, Michael Shernoff, Haworth Press.

Adults whose parent has died

When Parents Die: Learning to Live with the Loss of a Parent 1999, Rebecca Abrams, Routledge. A book for young people grieving a parent written by a woman whose father died when she was 18 years old.

When Your Parent Dies, Insights for Bereaved Adults 2002, Caroline Morcom & Patricia Scowen, Cruse Bereavement Care Publications, www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk.

When Parents Die: A Guide for Adults 1997, Edward Myers, Penguin. Aimed at adults who have been bereaved.

Bereaved parents and children

The Bereaved Parent 1978, Harriet Schiff Sarnoff, Penguin.

Living on the Seabed – A Memoir of Love, Life and Survival 2005, Lindsay Nicholson, Vermilion.

Death: Helping Children Understand 1996, Barnardos.

Someone to Talk to – a Handbook on Childhood Bereavement 2002, Pat Donnelly, Barnardos.

Helping your Child Through Bereavement 2000, Mary Paula Walsh, Veritas.

A Child's Grief: Supporting a Child when Someone in their Family has Died 2001, Julie Stokes & Diana Crossley, Winston's Wish.

The Grieving Child: a Parent's Guide, Helen Fitzgerald 1992, Simon and Schuster.

Straight Talk About Death for Teenagers: How to Cope with Losing Someone you Love 1993, Earl A. Grollman, Beacon Press.

Helping Children Cope With Grief: Facing a Death in the Family 1992, Rosemary Wells, Sheldon Press, UK.

Books for bereaved children

Children's Books for Special Needs – Death and Bereavement 2000, Barnardos. Available from libraries or from Barnardos. Gives information on books for bereaved children according to their age

The Huge Bag of Worries 1998, Virginia Ironside, Hodder & Stoughton.

Water Bugs and Dragonflies 1996, Doris Stickney, Mowbray.

When Someone Very Special Dies: Children can learn to cope with Grief 1991, Marge Heegaard, Fairview Press. This is a workbook which can be used to help children 7-11 years to express their thoughts and feelings

Badger's Parting Gifts 1992, Susan Varley, Picture Lions. For children 4-8 years

It Isn't Easy – Coping with the Hardest Thing of all - the Death of a Child 1999, Margaret Connolly, Oxford University Press. This is a story for children 7+ about a boy whose brother dies in an accident

After the Funeral 1995, Jane Loretta Winsch, Paulist Press. Simply talks about some of the thoughts and feelings the characters in the book had after someone they loved died. For children 5+ years

Alice's Dad – the loss of a parent after a long illness 1999, Bill Merrington, Kevin Mayhew Ltd.

Bereaved by suicide

You are not Alone: A guide for survivors in managing the aftermath of suicide, Health Service Executive. Available on line at www.hse.ie/en/publications.

Grieving the Suicide of a Loved One 2005, The Bereavement Counselling Service.

Living with Suicide 2005, Console.

A Voice for Those Bereaved by Suicide 2001, Sarah McCarthy. Veritas Written by a woman whose husband died by suicide.

A Special Scar: the Experience of People Bereaved by Suicide 2001, Allison Wertheimer, Brunner Routledge.

Beyond the Rough Rock: Supporting a Child who has been Bereaved through Suicide 2001, Diana Crossley & Julie Stokes, Winston's Wish.

Useful websites

Irish Hospice Foundation
www.hospice-foundation.ie

National Association of Widows in Ireland
www.nawi.ie

The Miscarriage Association of Ireland
www.miscarriage.ie

Rainbows Ireland - bereavement support for children
www.rainbowsireland.com

For people who have been bereaved through suicide
www.suicidebereaved.com

Information and support for those bereaved through SADS,
Sudden Adult Death Syndrome (UK)
www.c-r-y.org.uk/

The Compassionate Friends (UK) - support for bereaved parents
and their families
www.tcf.org.uk

Cruse Bereavement Care (UK) - offers information, advice and
support service
www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk/

BBC site (UK) - explores coping with grief with useful information,
reading and links
www.bbc.co.uk/relationships

Children's bereavement centre (UK) - support for bereaved families
www.childbereavement.org.uk

Mental Health Ireland - support and information for people who
are experiencing depression, anxiety or panic attacks.
www.mentalhealthireland.ie