

Becoming your healthy self

Your monthly self help toolkit

COLOUR ME IN! 

**Volume 2:
Grief**

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INTRODUCTION

What is Grief

Grief is a response to loss, particularly someone or something that means a lot to you. It covers many kinds of losses and an infinite range of emotions.

“Grief is the normal and natural emotional reaction to loss or change of any kind. Of itself, grief is neither a pathological condition nor a personality disorder.”*

When we lose something or someone important to us, it represents an end of something familiar and we must begin to adapt to a new reality, that we often didn't expect or want. Grief affects everyone differently, there's no right or wrong way to feel.

*Russell Friedman, 2019, The Grief Recovery Method - <https://www.griefrecoverymethod.com/blog/2013/06/best-grief-definition-you-will-find>

Bereavement and COVID-19

We understand that being bereaved or experiencing grief can be particularly difficult during this pandemic. This is because grieving can be a very lonely time. The advice is usually to avoid spending lots of time alone, but many of us have had to isolate in order to stay safe.

If someone dies from or during COVID-19, it may be very difficult to deal with:

- You might not have been able to spend time with your loved one or been able to say goodbye in person;
- The illness may have been sudden, causing shock to you and others;
- If you were not with someone when they died, it may be difficult to feel the death is real.

Grieving while alone can mean:

- Feelings are stronger;
- You might have to stay in the place you shared with someone who died, which can bring painful memories;
- You may be isolating with others, being together all the time can lead to tension and arguments;
- It may be harder to deal with grief when you are worried about this health pandemic.

Changes have also been made to lots of services, including end of life care and funeral arrangements.

FUNERALS AND MEMORIALS DURING COVID-19

During the pandemic there have been changes around funeral and memorial services in order for people to stay safe. This may be limited numbers of people and shorter services or you may have to wait longer than usual to hold a service. It may also mean that you are not able to attend a funeral, which can make the grieving process more difficult.

If you cannot go to the funeral:

- Ask if it is possible for someone to record the service;
- See if you can write or record a message to be played at the service, you could speak to the service director for advice;
- Speak to those who went and ask them to tell you about it;
- Set time aside to say your own private goodbyes;
- You could hold your own service at home. Some ideas might be to look at pictures, light a candle, play some of their favourite music or write a message to them;
- If you know someone who couldn't go to a funeral, keep in touch and let them know you're thinking of them.



Set time aside to say your own private goodbyes

BEREAVEMENT AND SUPPORT

Sudden Bereavement Helpline - 0800 2600 400

Sudden provides free help for anyone coping with a sudden bereavement through COVID-19 or another illness, a road crash, suicide, disaster, war, crime or accident.

At A Loss - ataloss.org

Providing the UK's signposting website for the bereaved.

The Good Grief Trust - thegoodgrieftrust.org

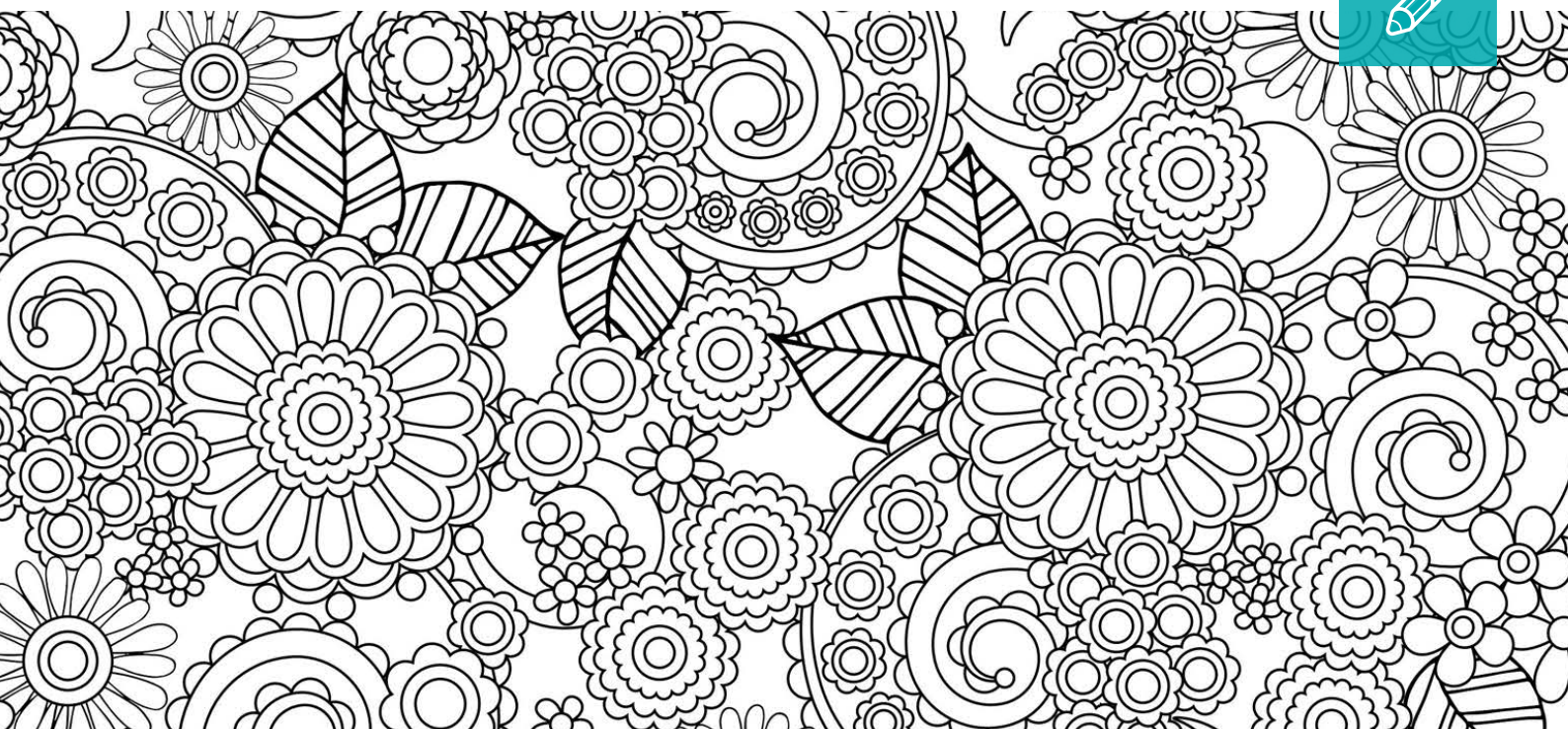
The Good Grief Trust will help you find the support you need as quickly as possible. You will find stories from others who have had a similar loss, practical and emotional support and signposting to a choice of immediate tailored local and national support.

Cruse Helpline - 0808 808 1677

Cruse offers support, advice and information to children, young people and adults when someone dies. We work to enhance society's care of bereaved people through telephone, email and website support.

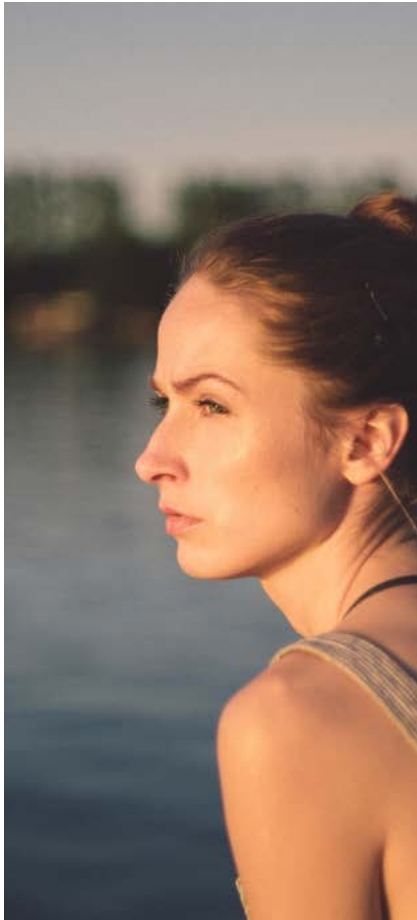
National Bereavement Partnership COVID-19 Hub - 0800 448 0800

Provides a platform for associated practical advice services, support assistance and where needed, counselling to all those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. You can also text 07860 022 814.



GRIEF - THE FACTS

You may experience the following:



Grief affects each person differently, don't compare your experience to others'.

- Guilt;
- Shock and feelings of unreality, particularly in the days after the death;
- Intense sadness, which can feel overwhelming;
- Anxiety, either general or about something specific;
- Worries about your own mortality;
- Anger and irritation – you may find yourself arguing unexpectedly with people you're close to;
- Feelings of hopelessness and depression;
- A need to be supportive of others and suppress your own grief;
- Some may also experience relief, perhaps if the person had been ill for a long time.

FACT:

Trying to ignore your pain or keep it from surfacing will only make it worse in the long run. For real healing, it is necessary to face your grief and actively deal with it.

GRIEF - THE FACTS

Some physical symptoms of grief may be:

- Exhaustion;
- Loss of appetite or comfort eating;
- Feeling sick or having an upset stomach;
- Panic attacks;
- Aches and pains, such as chest pain and headaches;
- Disturbed sleep or nightmares;
- Restlessness or hyperactivity.

FACT:

Crying is a normal response to sadness, but it's not the only one. Those who don't cry may feel the pain just as deeply as others. They may simply have other ways of showing it.

FACT:

Moving on means you've accepted your loss—but that's not the same as forgetting. You can move on with your life and keep the memory of someone or something you lost as an important part of you. In fact, as we move through life, these memories can become more and more integral to defining the people we are.

"The way grief affects you depends on lots of things, including what kind of loss you have suffered, your upbringing, your beliefs or religion, your age, your relationships, and your current physical and mental health."*

*<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/coping-with-bereavement/>



THE MYTHS WE NEED TO STOP BELIEVING

Myth

The best thing to do to help is to not talk about it

FACT

Those bereaved want and need to talk about their loss

A way to process a person's grief is for them to talk about how they are feeling. Don't let it become a taboo subject. People often think "we shouldn't talk about the person they lost". Why? Instead, why not share your favourite memories you had together. People experiencing grief comment that the people who they find the most comforting are the people who don't try to distract them from their grief..

There are no set guidelines or rules regarding the grieving process. You can't hurry somebody into "getting over" a loss. Statements like "it happened a while ago, you should be over it by now" can have a damaging effect on the person who is grieving. It can make them not want to open up about their pain when in reality it is when they need support the most.

Myth

There is a time limit on grief

FACT

There is no clear beginning or end for when someone will start or stop grieving.

Myth

Support groups are depressing and won't help

FACT

Supports groups can be beneficial in helping those who are bereaved.

Sharing an experience with somebody who can say "I understand" or "I've been there" can be just the emotional support a person needs. The support groups are specially designed to give the griever encouragement, sympathy and practical advice from others in the same position and can share healthy ways to adjust to their losses.



ALI'S STORY

"My mum passed away just after my 14th birthday. This week I am approaching my 17th birthday and I am hopeful for the future. I used to dread birthdays, as it always reminded me of the one person who was not there to celebrate it with me. Not a day goes by that I don't think about my mum. However, I am determined to succeed in my upcoming A-Levels and become a Doctor like my mother. Whilst birthdays have always compounded my sense of loss, being hopeful has enabled me to enshrine a positive mental attitude that will see me through to the future. My advice to anyone facing the loss of a loved one is to train yourself to think positively. Celebrate their life and make sure you do them proud."

Ali x

<https://www.hopeagain.org.uk/hope-again-personal-stories>

LAUREN'S STORY

"My dad was a house husband and raised myself and my brother whilst my mum worked. He was so reliable - if I needed him he would be there without question. We had the same sense of humour and strong moral outlook on life. Whilst I was away on holiday with my boyfriend 6 months ago my dad suffered a huge unexpected heart attack and there was nothing that paramedics could do to save him. My mum was by his side when it happened and she has taught me that you have just got to focus on all of the great things in your life and all you have to be thankful for. I had 22 years of unconditional love and friendship with my amazing, caring dad (and it doesn't just end now he's gone)- some people can't even say that. It is still raw and I don't think I have fully accepted that this has happened, but I can say that the initial few weeks and months after you lose someone do ease gently and you will be able to function again. Remember that you were lucky enough to know and love the person you have lost and they will always be with you."

Lauren x

<https://www.hopeagain.org.uk/hope-again-personal-stories>

CHARLOTTE'S STORY

“Nothing can prepare you for the loss of a loved one and the grief that surrounds you.

When you lose a loved one, you have to learn to live a life without them in it, but how can you when all you've ever known is to have them by your side?

I have found that it doesn't matter how a person passes, it is still incredibly hard to adjust to the new world that you are entering.

When I lost my father, it was so sudden. I went to sleep one night and when I woke up he was gone. I never got to say goodbye or ask him the questions that I now wish I had the answers to.

It feels lonely and empty. You find yourself looking at random areas of the house, parts of the town or at anything that leaves a memory.

Their scent still lingers, their mess is still scattered around the house. Really, it seems like they are not gone at all, they have just left the house for a little while.

It's very easy to start to make excuses, to find any reason that they may still be alive. You'll hope and pray that this is all a bad dream, that if you pinch yourself you will wake up and you can give them a big hug.

I believe that the hard part is the time after their death, when you know that they are gone and that they are never coming back.

It's when you are celebrating Christmas years after and you look at the empty chair, or when something good happens to you and the person you want to tell, is gone.

It took me a long time to grieve, to understand the situation and to find the courage to let go of his hand.

Life is easier now, I can smile and feel joy without feeling guilty, I can live my life and no longer feel like I died with my father.

There is no rule book on grief, there is no check list. Grief is something that we just have to allow into our lives and work through on our own.

Support is always a great thing, it's important for keeping yourself afloat. But the way you grieve and manage it, that's an individual thing.

I have learned through the loss of my father that it is important to grieve in your own time and way. People may have expectations, you may be told to move on, but you must ignore that, this cannot be measured by time.

One day, you will be able to wake up and live your life. A life that is different but it is a life never the less.

You will never move on, not really, because you went through a significant loss; you can however learn to live alongside their memory and enjoy the time you have left on this earth.

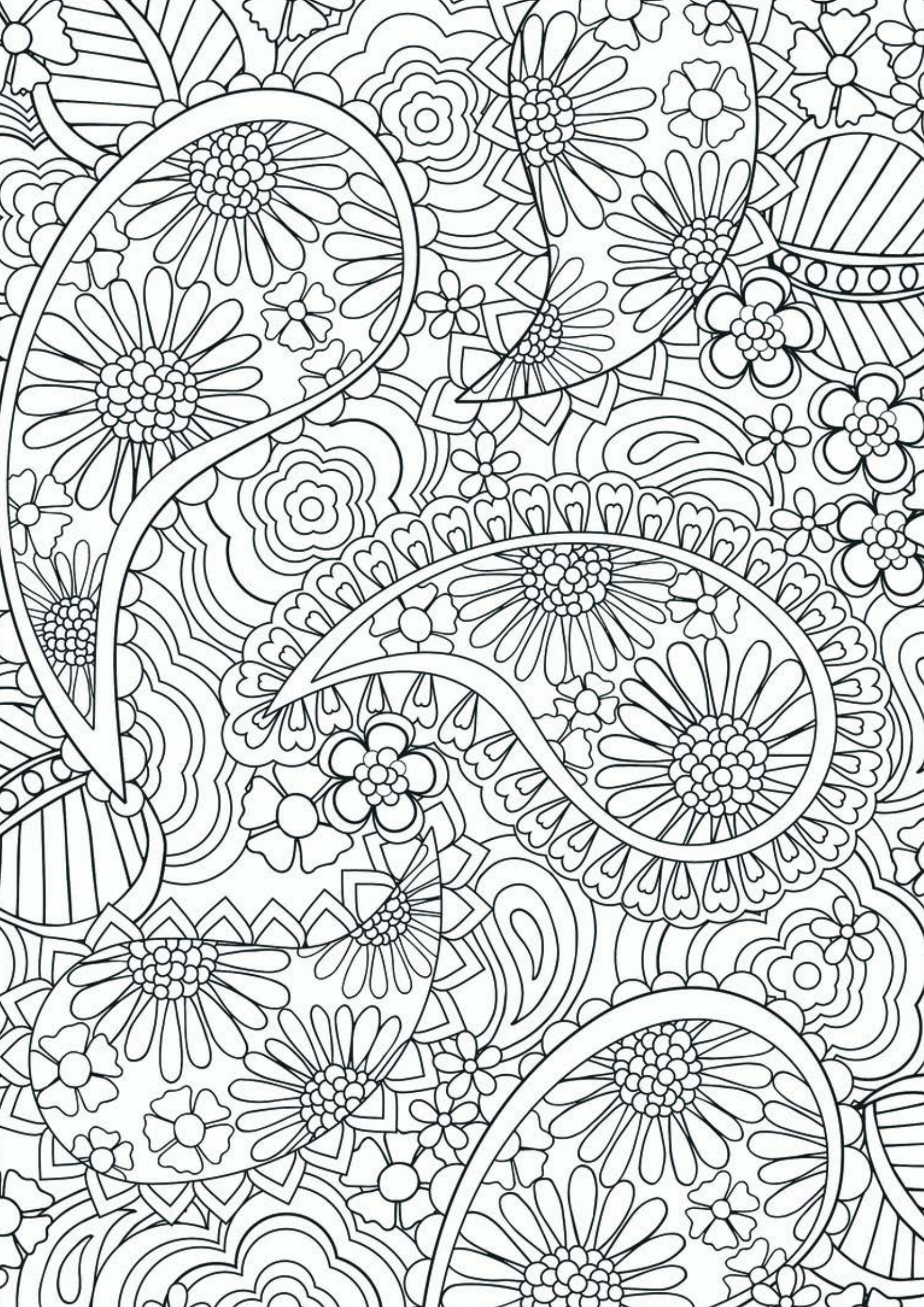
I do feel good in myself today. which is strange to say after suffering with depression for so long, I never thought my life would amount to anything other than the 'black' void I faced.

Despite my battles with mental health and the heaviness that grief left me with, I enjoy my life and the success that has happened since my father's death, because I have allowed myself to.

It took a lot of work and patience on my part. I suppose all that can be said is that life will not always be bad, you will not always feel the pain that is left after loss. Things do change for the better. I promise you that.”

<https://www.griefincommon.com/blog/the-loss-of-a-loved-one-a-personal-account/>









Charlotte x



MENTAL HEALTH TRACKER

Throughout the day, use the symbols below to track how you are feeling, what you are doing, and anything else that you think may be significant to your mental health. If your moods, thoughts or behaviour are getting in the way of your everyday life, consider sharing your tracker with someone you trust and feel able to talk to.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

I felt...				How much (many) _____ did I...				Other	
	Happy		Hyper	zzz	Sleep	D	Drugs		
	Sad		Anxious	F	Food	Al	Alcohol		
	Tired		Irritable	E	Exercise	SH	Self Harm		
	Angry		Calm	C	Cigarettes	S	Thoughts of suicide		



WELLBEING ASSESSMENT

In the last week I have:

- ☐ Felt upset or cried for no reason
- ☐ Avoided a situation because I was worried how I would cope
- ☐ Been awake all night thinking about things
- ☐ Found it very difficult to get out of bed in the morning
- ☐ Felt unable to talk about my feelings to someone close to me
- ☐ Felt unable to focus or concentrate
- ☐ Constantly felt tired and lethargic
- ☐ Felt as though nothing is going right
- ☐ Worried that friends/ family/ colleagues don't like me
- ☐ Had feelings that I don't deserve what I have got
- ☐ Felt as though I don't want to engage in hobbies/ leisure activities
- ☐ Felt anxious or uncertain about the future
- ☐ Used drugs or alcohol excessively to try and make myself feel better
- ☐ Been bothered by a lack, or increase, in appetite
- ☐ Felt angry or irritated by minor things
- ☐ Felt as though I can't control my emotions
- ☐ Been unable to relax
- ☐ Experienced persistent, negative thoughts

If you have ticked six or more symptoms, you may be experiencing difficulties with your mental health. Take some steps to improve your own wellbeing with our wellbeing tips, or speak to your GP about further support. If you need immediate support, refer to our helpful support numbers section on page 5.

GRIEF SELF REFLECTION

Right now I feel...

I feel most upset when ...

These are the things I miss most about the person I've lost...

Since the loss the following things have changed...

Those close to me feel...

The thing I liked most about the person I lost was...

If I could tell the person I lost one thing, I would say...

If the person I lost could tell me one thing now, they would probably say...

MY MENTAL HEALTH TEMPERATURE

Our mental health is fluid; sometimes we have good days and sometimes bad days. It's useful to regularly assess where we are so that we know if we need extra support.

Mild	1	feel amazing, everything is absolutely fine, and nothing is going wrong. I feel very happy with my life.
	2	At times I feel a little frustrated or down, but it doesn't take much to distract me from this and I'm soon cheered up.
	3	There are some things which are bothering me, but I'm coping ok. It might be I'm a bit overtired, not eating healthily or feel a little emotional. It usually helps if I offload to someone I trust.
Moderate	4	I'm having a bad time at the moment. I know I will be able to get myself through it. I need to take part in some self-care activities, i.e. going for a walk or reading a book.
	5	My mental health is starting to impact on parts of my everyday life, I'm having more bad days than normal. I'm finding it hard to find motivation for things that I used to find easy. It might be time for me to speak to my doctor.
	6	My mental health is stopping me from doing some things the way that I usually would. I'm experiencing negative and intrusive thoughts which are hard to cope with.
Severe	7	I'm avoiding being in any situations which might make me feel worse, but I'm also avoiding things that would normally make me feel better. I do not feel my usual self. This is getting serious, I should definitely seek help.
	8	I can no longer keep hidden how much I'm struggling. The way that I'm feeling is seriously affecting my sleep, appetite, productivity at work and ability to have fun. I'm socialising less and becoming more withdrawn. My mental health is affecting nearly all aspects of my life.
	9	I feel like I'm at breaking point. I feel like I hate myself, my life and the world. I am deeply unhappy and I can't see how things will get better. I'm having thoughts of hurting myself or others. I need to seek urgent help.
	10	My mental health is at rock bottom, there is no worse feeling than how I feel now. I've completely stopped looking after myself. Things can't get any worse than they are now and I feel like I can't cope with life anymore. I need to seek immediate help.

12 TIPS FOR MANAGING GRIEF AND LOSS

Write a letter to the person you've lost, tell them exactly what you're going through.

Don't avoid special events-- plan ahead of time and consider what will change and what will remain the same.

BE OPEN

Talk about your feelings.

Write lists of good things about the person you lost.

Create a memory book filled with pictures, stories and mementos of your loved one.

CRY!

Tears are as natural as laughter and just as therapeutic. It takes much more energy to keep your feelings inside, than to let them out.

Write down the loving things they said to you that you never want to forget.

TALK

Talk out loud to the person who you've lost.

Visit a place that reminds you of your loved one.

Consider memorialising your loved one, whether it be in your home, or somewhere else.

Tell others clearly what you want and need.

Consider joining a support group.

PRACTISING GRATITUDE

Sometimes it can feel like nothing is going right, and as a result we can lose sight of the good things that do happen to us. On this page, and the next page, is a box for each day of the month, inside of it try and write down one good thing that has happened this month. It can be a daily thing, it can be weekly, or it can be for the whole month, just put something down that is positive and brings back a good memory for yourself.

Instructions:

1. Write the date
2. Write down what made you happy, try to focus on something that you have done;
i.e: "tried jalapeños for the first time, loved them!"
3. Keep this list to reflect on the month, or pop into a memory jar for future reflection.

Day 1 Date:

Day 2 Date:

Day 3 Date:

Day 4 Date:

Day 5 Date:

Day 6 Date:

Day 7 Date:

Day 8 Date:

Day 9 Date:

Day 10 Date:

Day 11 Date:

Day 12 Date:

Day 13 Date:

Day 14 Date:

Day 15 Date:

Day 16 Date:

Day 17 Date:

Day 18 Date:

Day 19 Date:

Day 20 Date:

Day 21 Date:

Day 22 Date:

Day 23 Date:

Day 24 Date:

Day 25 Date:

Day 26 Date:

Day 27 Date:

Day 28 Date:

Day 29 Date:

Day 30 Date:

Day 31 Date:

NOTES

BRAINTEASERS

Grief and Loss Quiz

The following are either True or False

1. Normal grief lasts 6 days to 2 weeks.	TRUE	FALSE
2. Children 5 years of age and under are too young to feel grief or to have a need to resolve a death loss.	TRUE	FALSE
3. By the second anniversary of the death, the family healing should be complete.	TRUE	FALSE
4. Anger, guilt, and abandonment reflected at the person who died is normal and healthy.	TRUE	FALSE
5. A death after a long illness is always easier to resolve than a sudden, catastrophic death, murder, or suicide.	TRUE	FALSE
6. Grief and mourning are the same experience.	TRUE	FALSE
7. Those with good self-esteem adjust better to loss than those with low self-esteem.	TRUE	FALSE
8. Following the death of someone significant to you, the goal is to get over your grief.	TRUE	FALSE
9. When we cry, we are physically eliminating the chemicals from our body that cause stress.	TRUE	FALSE
10. Loss can be viewed as a needs deprivation state.	TRUE	FALSE
11. Loss is usually isolated, not involving several levels.	TRUE	FALSE
12. Some of the stages of grief include: denial, bargaining, depression, and reconciliation.	TRUE	FALSE
13. It is best to move away from the pain of grief instead of leaning into it.	TRUE	FALSE
14. There is a predictable and orderly stage like progression to the experience of mourning.	TRUE	FALSE

Healing Grief

N F F J T Z M C N A D B B E O
 L R H S U P P O R T H Z F X M
 Z I E C J L M L I F E I U P T
 L E A T O H E B U C C C T E Z
 E N L I Y B M J C L X Q U R W
 H D I M H U O R V A G C R I B
 A S N E O R R A N R D S E E E
 P Z G P P Y I Y Y I H S F N T
 P V S V E H E U V T R B M C T
 I Q P I Y R S G L Y V S W E E
 N F A A F A M I L Y S M P P R
 E F I Z V C O N F I D E N C E
 S I I F L Z P O S I T I V E J
 S G T C A L M L J F W U L A K
 P H O T O S L Q V S S V N Y S

CONFIDENCE MEMORIES HEALING CLARITY HOPE

EXPERIENCE SUPPORT PHOTOS LIFE

JOY FRIENDS BETTER FUTURE

POSITIVE FAMILY CALM TIME HAPPINESS



**No rule book.
No time frame.
No judgement.**

**Grief is as
individual as a
fingerprint.**

**Do what is right for
your soul.**

www.onefitwidow.com

SELF HELP

Goodbye Letter

To: _____

I am saying goodbye to you because

Saying goodbye to you makes me feel

I remember a time when we

I learned from you

Something I want you to know is

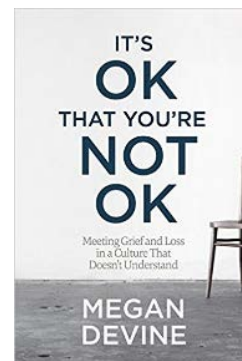
I will always remember

SELF-HELP BOOKS & APPS

BOOKS

It's Ok That You're Not Ok: Meeting Grief and Loss in a Culture That Doesn't Understand

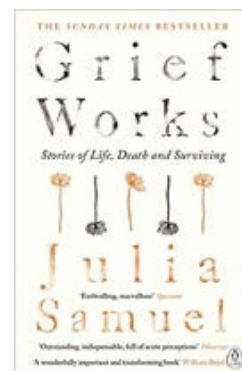
In 2009, on a beautiful sunny day, Megan Devine witnessed the accidental drowning of her beloved partner Matt. "All my professional experience as a therapist felt meaningless," she writes. "Grief literature is loaded with well-intended advice that can actually worsen and extend someone's pain. We just don't know how to handle loss in our culture." Megan has dedicated herself to helping people find a new way to deal with loss that honors our experience without trying to "solve" grief.



With *It's OK That You're Not OK*, Megan reveals a path for navigating grief and loss not by trying to escape it, but by learning to live inside of it with more grace and strength. Through stories, research, life tips, and mindfulness-based practices, she offers a unique guide through an experience we all must face. Here she debunks the culturally prescribed goal of returning to a normal, "happy" life, replacing it with the skills and tools to help us experience and witness the pain of loss in ourselves and others--so we may meet our grief knowing it to be a natural step in the greater journey of love.

Grief Works: Stories of Life, Death and Surviving

Death is the last taboo in our society, and grief is still profoundly misunderstood. So many of us feel awkward and uncertain around death, and shy away from talking honestly with family and friends. *Grief Works* is a compassionate guide that will inform and engage anyone who is grieving, from the 'expected' death of a parent to the sudden unexpected death of a small child, and provide clear advice for those seeking to comfort the bereaved.



With deeply moving case studies of real people's stories of loss, and brilliantly accessible and practical advice, *Grief Works* will be passed down through generations as the definitive guide for anyone who has lost a loved one, and revolutionise the way we talk about life, loss and death.



SELF-HELP APPS & PODCASTS

APPS

HEADSPACE APP-

An app aimed at promoting wellbeing through meditation and mindfulness techniques. Coping with grief is one area of mental wellbeing that you can sign up to receive helpful meditations for. You can begin with a 'basics' taster and choose to subscribe for regular updates.

GRIEF APP -

This app has been created by leading bereavement charity Child Bereavement UK. It is for 11-25 year olds who have been bereaved of someone important to them. It can also be used by friends, teachers, parents and professionals who would like to know how to support bereaved young people. The app has information about bereavement, grief, feelings and how to help yourself.

You can also read others' stories and watch short films written and made by bereaved young people

COVE APP -

Create music to capture your mood and express how you feel with the Cove app. Instead of words, create music to reflect emotions like joy, sadness, calm and anger. You can store your music in a personal journal, or send them to someone and let the music do the talking..

PODCASTS

GRIEF WORKS -

Julia Samuel. Same as the book above; on this podcast, you hear stories from those who have experienced great love and loss – and survived.



GRIEF CAST -

How do we actually grieve for someone? This podcast is a chance to talk, share and laugh about the weirdness around grief, death, pain and agony – but with comedians.

Each week talking to a comedian about their experience of losing someone they love.

WHO ARE WE?

We are a registered charity providing free advocacy support across the North West.

Advocacy means supporting a person to become more involved in important decisions about their health & social care.

Our Advocates help people who have difficulty with communicating their thoughts, needs and wishes or making decisions about things such as how or where they are cared for.

We help people access the support they need and become more involved in decisions about their care and treatment.

We help people live the lives they want to live.



Did you know we offer a wide range of training courses?

You can check out our Mental Health training courses [here](#), and our Menopause courses [here](#). We can also provide tailored advocacy training, you can enquire about this by emailing Training@advocacyfocus.org.uk.

All training revenue generated is invested back into supporting our communities

Coming up in the next issue: Young People's Mental Health
Stay up-to-date by signing up to our newsletter at
advocacyfocus.org.uk/Pages/FAQs/Category/newsletter

