

# "Bereavement "A common experience".

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Sooner or later most of us will suffer the death of someone we love.

In our everyday life we think and talk about the transition of our spirit and our physical material death very little, in part because it is more remote to our everyday lives and encounter it less often in a highly personal way than our grandparents did.

For them, the death of a brother or sister, friend or relative, was a common experience in their childhood or teenage years.

Today, these losses usually happen later in life. We do not have much of an opportunity to learn about grieving - how it feels, what are the right things to do, what is 'normal' - or how to come to terms with it.

In spite of this we have to cope when we are finally faced with the death of someone close to us we love.

In this writing I am also addressing the sensitive area of how we note the passing of not only those clearly wonderful loved persons but also those *who were less than generous in their sharing, their love and personal charity of themselves. How do we mourn their passing, acknowledge their life and get for ourselves the very real closure we need from the often negative effects these individuals had on us as persons and our lives.*

Presented here for your help is information about some of the ways in which we grieve after such a loss, about the ways in which bereaved can **get stuck** in the grieving process, and the help available.

Grieving takes place after **any sort of loss**, but most powerfully after the death of someone we love

**. It is not just one feeling, but also a whole succession of feelings; these take time to get through and really cannot and should not be hurried.**

We are all individuals yet we are all joined as brothers and sisters in the same spiritual family; the order in which we experience these feelings is very similar.

Grief is experienced after the death of someone we have known for some time. However people who have had stillbirths or miscarriages, or who have lost very young babies suffer grieving those who had had abortions suffer depression, even guilt that stays with them for years in part due to the lack of a recognised personal grieving process.

Others who had given infants away to adoption or other arrangement also suffer the loss as if a part of them was gone. Without proper closure this can last a lifetime.

These persons need the same level of care and loving, compassionate, considerations as if a death has occurred. For them the loss is just as real and even more so in that the end is not definite like in some way a file is left open.

In the few hours or days following the death of a close relative or friend, most people feel simply stunned, as though they cannot believe it has actually happened. We feel like this even if the death has been expected.

This sense of emotional numbness can be help in getting through all the important practical arrangements that have to be made, such as getting in touch with relatives and organising the funeral. This feeling of unreality may become a problem if it goes on too long.

Viewing the body of the deceased person maybe an important way of beginning to overcome this helping in the acceptance of what has occurred and start the moving on to life thoughts beyond the death.

For many, the funeral or memorial service is an occasion when the reality of what has happened really starts to sink in.

It may be distressing to see the body or attend the funeral, but these are ways of saying goodbye to those we love.

At the time, these may seem too painful to go through and so are not done. However, this often leads to a sense of deep regret in future years, as total closure never seems to come.

This numbness disappears and may be replaced by a dreadful sense of agitation, of pining or yearning for the dead person.

There is a feeling of wanting somehow to find them, even though this is clearly impossible. We resist the normal reaction to look for them in crowds or simply walking up the street as you drive by.

This makes it difficult to relax or concentrate and it may be difficult to sleep properly.

Dreams may be extremely disturbing.

Some people feel that they 'see' their loved one everywhere they go - in the street, the park, around the house, anywhere they had spent time together.

We may feel very angry at this time - towards doctors and nurses who did not prevent the death, towards friends and relatives who did not do enough, or **even towards the person who has left us.**

***A sense of being somehow abandoned comes over us. We all prepare in our mind for this unpreventable eventuality of the transition of a close friend and love ones but nothing prepares us better than sure knowledge that they are indeed in a place of great joy, love and purposefulness.***

***Three events taking place at every death and funeral***

***First. The marking and acknowledgement of the material death of the body. Simply stated the physical body could no longer support our loved ones eternal indwelling spirit, which used it on its material journey in this world.***

***Second. The loved ones spirit has left the body and has begun its journey to the heavenly dimension. At this time there may be great sensations of them being in the room and generally around the house or other favourite places of the departed. This can be unsettling to some but really it is a loving action and those left behind need to take comfort in that all that is happening is the departed wants them to know that they are all right, all is well, and they are happy, still loving them even from another dimension.***

***The sense of their presence diminishes quickly after all of the formal services.***

***Further intimate contacts are rare and usually only with the loved ones wife or husband still in this dimension.***

***Over time these contacts become fewer and fewer stopping usually altogether within a year or two. Most commonly however within a few a few weeks or months.***

***Third: As we go into the morning and saying goodbyes process we become keenly aware of our own mortality and our own eventual time of spiritual transition and our own material physical death.***

***This awareness is now in front of us in a way that no longer seems off into the future. It's truth is here now in the room with us in the form of our loved and newly departed. We no longer can hide from its inevitability and its true reality. We simply must comes to terms with it and prepare ourselves for that time when others will be in the room sharing their memories of us and we are the spirit in air telling them from the heavenly dimension that you are all right and that you still "love them".***

A common feeling of those close to the departed is guilt in that there are too many things left undone, unsaid.

You may even consider what you could have done differently that might have prevented the death. This not a path of construction but one of destruction. At all costs do not pick up that idea. What is done is in fact done. Move on!

The outcome of illness and or upset is simply done, finished, no more to be done or said.

Closure is required for your own continued mental health and your ability to cope effectively with what is your future. That now becomes your prime directive. It is imperative that you come to terms with the events around this death so that you can shape a new life with dimension and meaning beyond simply getting by.

Sooner or later you will want and need to cross over and get on with life, a life of quality, definition and meaning.

We simply cannot fall into the trap that the life that was is the only reason for your being here in this physical dimension.

There are many reasons and charities of our spirit and ourselves yet to be found, developed and implemented these be may indeed be greater then we had dared dream.

Find your own self-love; do not let go in the rush to self-pity. *You are here and you with your love must not only survive but also truly live life in love for others.*

Of course, final death is usually beyond anyone's control and a bereaved person may need to be reminded of this.

Guilt may also arise if a sense of relief is felt when someone has died after a particularly painful or distressing illness.

This feeling of relief is natural, extremely understandable and very common.

This state of agitation is usually strongest about *two weeks after the death*; it is soon followed by times of quiet sadness or depression, withdrawal and silence.

These sudden changes of emotion can be confusing to friends or relatives but are just part of the normal way of passing through the different stages of grief.

Although the agitation lessens, the periods of depression become more frequent and reach their peak between four and six weeks later.

The depression is really not that at all but rather a melancholy of missing our departed and the recognition that we will one day be the one all this is about while realising our inability to change that fact. In effect *we are mourning ourselves. Grieving for our own yet unfulfilled life, for a time we attend our own funeral in a virtual sense.* This is totally normal even desirable to achieve the real closure we seek.

Waves of grief can embrace us at any moment. Sparked off by people, places or things that bring back memories of the deceased individual.

Others may find it difficult to understand or even embarrassing when the bereaved person suddenly bursts into tears or shows deep emotional turmoil for no apparent reason.

At this stage it may be tempting to keep away from other people who do not fully understand or share the grief. To withdraw and be alone with our feelings. This occurs at *two very different levels.*

**The first** is that our loss is so complete we are embarrassed to be in too much public and even close friends are not encouraged to be there with us. It is awkward to fully accept that every one does not have the same depth of sorrow and regret as you do.

It seems only right to hold them off until you are ready to be with them once more in a normal way simply socialising on topics of

the day rather than the loss which has occurred.

**The second** reason to be secluded or at least feel the need to be is when you do not feel the grief which every thinks you should be having. This is indeed awkward and the need to put on a grief stricken face simply is not there for you. The deceased was less then loving, less then charitable towards you, less then supporting of your hopes, dreams desires and yes even your very real human needs. How then do you show what's expected. Withdraw for a time and be yourself behind the closed doors. Plan a tip away for a time leaving as soon as possible. Visit close members of family who live far away.

Avoiding. Others can create misunderstandings and complications for the near future; it is usually best to try to start to return to one's normal activities after a period of two or three weeks or when you really can embrace a limited amount of contact with a high degree of honesty.

During this time the bereaved are usually thinking about the person they have lost, going over again and again both the good times and the bad times they had together. Reliving these times and getting closure is a quiet but essential part of coming to terms with the departure of a loved one.

As time passes, the fierce pain of early bereavement begins to fade.

The depression and melancholy lessen and it is possible to think about other things and even to look again to the future.

However, ***the sense of having lost a part of oneself never goes away entirely.***

For bereaved partners there are constant reminders of their new singleness, in seeing other couples together and from the deluge of media images of happy families.

After some time it is possible to feel whole again, even though a part is missing. Even so, years later you may sometimes find

yourself talking as though he or she were still here with you.

These various stages of mourning often overlap and show themselves in different ways.

Most recover from a major bereavement ***within one or two years.***

The final phase of grieving is a letting-go of the person who has died and the start of a new sort of life.

The depression clears completely, sleep improves and energy returns too normal. *Sexual feelings may have vanished for some time, but now return - this is quite normal and nothing to be ashamed of.*

There is no 'standard' way of grieving. We are all individuals and have our own particular ways of grieving.

In our civilization and religious ethic we approach very funeral as if it was always a Godly good person who has past over. This is an ideal and really not true in a very large portion of the deaths honoured in the funeral service.

**Many are those of really nasty Irreverent persons** who have emotionally or otherwise victimised persons the majority of their life. Many of those may be present in the funeral if for no other reason but to see that they are really dead. This is fully understandable. It is critical that the victims recognises That they are now free of them and that they now have to forgive them really from their heart or they will continue to be a victim of the dead person the rest of their life. They critically, must let go and turn them over to the judgement of God. This ends the cycle of victimizations. To hold on to the hurt and pain wounds the soul needlessly. To truly forgive heals their soul and the balance of the future life for all.

In addition, people from different cultures deal with death in their own, distinctive ways.

Over the centuries, people in different parts of the world have worked out their own ceremonies for coping with death.

In some communities death is seen as just one step of life and death rather than as a 'full stop'.

The rituals and ceremonies of mourning may be very public and demonstrative, or private and quiet. In some cultures the period of mourning is fixed, in others not.

The feelings experienced by bereaved in different cultures may be similar, but their ways of expressing them are very different.

Even though children may not understand the meaning of death until they are three or four years old, they feel the loss of close relatives in much the same way as adults. It is clear that, even from infancy, children grieve and feel great distress.

However, they have a different experience of time from that of adults and may go through the stages of mourning quite rapidly. In their early school years children may feel responsible for the death of a close relative and so may need to be reassured.

***Young people may not speak of their grief for fear of adding extra burdens to the grown-ups around them. They need to be encouraged to talk about their feelings and get answers to their deepest questions about every aspect of the death process and our reactions to them.***

***Young persons get impressions at these events that last a lifetime. It is very important that they come to a healthy, respectful closure themselves.***

The grief of children and adolescents, and their need for mourning, should not be overlooked when a member of the family has died. They should be included in the funeral arrangements. Talked to about what they mean and other items.

Time with the person who has been bereaved.

It is not so much words of comfort that are needed, but more the willingness to be with them during the time of their pain and distress.

A sympathetic arm around the shoulders will express care and support when words are not enough.

It is important that, if they wish it, bereaved people are able to cry with somebody and talk about their feelings of pain and distress ***without being told to pull themselves together.***

In time, they will get over it, but first they need to "talk and to cry."

Others may find it hard to understand why the bereaved have to keep going over the same ground again and again, but this is part of the process of resolving grief and should be encouraged.

If you don't know what to say, or don't even know whether to talk about it or not, be honest and say so.

This gives the bereaved person a chance to tell you what he or she wants.

People often avoid mentioning the name of the person who has died for fear that it will be upsetting. However, to the bereaved person it may seem as though others have forgotten their loss, adding a sense of isolation to their painful feelings of grief.

It must be remembered that festive occasions and anniversaries (not only of the death but also birthdays and weddings) are particularly painful times when friends and relatives can make a special effort to be around.

Practical help with cleaning, shopping or looking after children can ease the burden of being alone.

Elderly bereaved partners may need help with the chores that the deceased partner used to handle - coping with bills, cooking, housework, getting the car serviced and so on.

It is important to allow people enough time to grieve.

Some can get over the loss quickly, others take longer. So don't expect too much too soon from a bereaved relative or friend - they need the time to grieve properly, and this will help to avoid problems in the future.

There are those who seem hardly to grieve at all.

They do not cry at the funeral, avoid any mention of their loss and return to their normal life remarkably quickly.

This is ***their normal way*** of dealing with loss and no harm results, but others may suffer from strange physical symptoms or repeated spells of depression over the following years.

Some may not have the opportunity to grieve properly. The heavy demands of looking after a family or business may mean that there just isn't the time.

Sometimes the problem is that the loss is not seen as a 'proper' bereavement.

This happens often, but by no means always, to those who have had a miscarriage or stillbirth, or even an abortion. Again, frequent periods of depression may follow.

***Some may start to grieve, but get stuck. The early sense of shock and disbelief just goes on and on. Years may pass and still the sufferer finds it hard to believe that the person they loved is dead. Others may carry on being unable to think of anything else, often making the room of the dead person into a kind of shrine to their memory.***

Occasionally the depression and melancholy that occurs with ***every bereavement may deepen to the extent that food and drink are refused and thoughts of suicide arise.***

Occasionally ***sleepless nights may go on for so long as to become a serious problem.*** The doctor may then prescribe a few days' supply of sleeping tablets.

*If the depression continues to deepen, affecting appetite, energy and sleep, anti-depressant tablets may be necessary; these are not habit-forming. If the depression still does not improve, the family doctor may help with a counsellor who deals in this type of bereavement counselling.*

For most, it will be enough to meet people and talk with others who have been through the same experience. Others may need to see a bereavement counsellor or psychotherapist, either in a special group or on their own for a while.

***Bereavement turns our world upside-down and is one of the most painful experiences we endure.***

It can be strange, terrible and overwhelming and with all of that very fulfilling and meaningful as the bereaved redefines their own world and life anew.

In spite of this, it is a part of life that we all go through and usually does not require medical intervention rather a counsellor is the best solution.

For those who can use emotional and real , help it is at hand from our counselling services.

Contact direct right now

Rev Gordon Allen

***Phone him for a confidential appointment. Call 206 527 4500***

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