

Our
Lady's
**Hospice
& Care
Services**

*Respite
Rehabilitation
Reassurance*

**Harold's Cross
Blackrock
Wicklow**

Bereavement Service

What is grief?

Grief is a natural and normal response to loss. Everyone grieves in different ways depending on the kind of person you are, the relationship you had with the person who died, the length of time you spent together, and whether the death was sudden or expected.

It can be a very traumatic and stressful experience. When you are grieving, you can feel very different from your usual self. Your emotions, your mind, and your reactions may seem unreliable. There will be some days when you feel fine and others when you feel overwhelmed by your loss. These days can be triggered by a birthday or anniversary, or simply by a memory, like hearing a favourite song, or passing a familiar looking person or car in the street.

Everyone's loss is different and everyone's experience of grief is unique.

What can I expect?

We cannot fully prepare for the impact death will have on us. After the initial shock, bereaved people often experience a mixture of emotions, and may feel irritable, confused, relieved, angry, sad or lonely. These are all normal responses to loss. Some people describe the grieving process as a roller coaster, full of ups and downs; times when we seem to be doing okay, along with times that we think we are not doing so well.

Sometimes it can be hard to take care of everyday tasks. Energy levels may be low, or you may not be eating or sleeping well, or your concentration or memory may be poor.

Grief doesn't follow a particular course, or go through a particular set of stages. It is process, and we all experience it differently. There is no right or wrong way. The intensity of your grief will change over time.



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Remembering the relationship

Your life has been changed forever but the memory of the relationship with the person who died will continue to be important in your life. You need time to grieve and time to readjust.

Finding a meaningful way to maintain a connection to the person who died by chatting about them, looking at photos and sharing memories with family and friends can sometimes help.

Adjusting to loss may require learning to take over new tasks that your loved one or partner used to do, like learning to manage finances or learning to cook. It is ok to set aside your grief to grapple with your changed circumstances and then take up your grief again. You are not being disloyal or cold if you find yourself enjoying your growing confidence as you master new tasks.

Learning to live on after the loss of a loved one may demand of you to think of those qualities or gifts you have gained from knowing them.

Children and grief

Children's understanding of death and how they grieve will depend on their stage of development. Even very young children can have an understanding of death. It is important to use simple, clear language to explain death to children. Similar to adults, children grieve in different ways. Many children cope with grief through the support of caring adults. However, if you have concerns about your child's grief, you can contact our bereavement service for support and advice.

Caring for yourself

Every loss is different, therefore your experience of grieving is individual and may bring up memories of previous losses. Allow yourself to grieve your way and remember others may do it differently.

- If possible, avoid making major life changing decisions in the first year.
- Allow yourself to feel the emotions that are part of grief.
- Talk about your grief – find people who will listen and not judge.



Growth and Change

Many people discover they have the strength to deal with the death of a loved one without professional help. Death will bring change and may bring growth. Have hope that things will change and improve. Everything changes eventually.

- Accept emotional and practical support.
- Continue to go out and meet friends even if this is an effort.
- Eat small, regular meals.
- Walk or take physical exercise.
- Take daily rest.
- Be careful of drinking alone.
- Allow yourself to move in and out of grief – be tolerant and patient with yourself.
- Live in the present, taking one minute/hour/day at a time.

Seeking Help

Most people cope with grief with the support of friends and family, and some benefit from talking to other bereaved people. If you are finding the experience very difficult or very distressing it may be helpful to discuss this with your GP.

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Bereavement Service

Our Bereavement Service is available to adults and children who have had a loved one die in our care. It is free and non-denominational. We recognise that people living in Ireland from different cultural backgrounds may experience or express their grief in different ways. The bereavement service will try to offer the support that would be helpful to meet your particular needs.

- **Remembrance Evening**

This event provides information on the grieving process and an opportunity to remember the person who has died through poetry, music and ritual. Information is provided on accessing other bereavement services. To receive an invite please ensure you return a *Keeping In Touch* form to OLH&CS. Invitations are sent three to five months after bereavement.

- **Individual bereavement support and counselling** for adults and children, provided by professionals and the bereavement support team.

- **Children's bereavement weekend.**

This group, for children, helps to normalise the experience of loss and ease the sense of isolation that many experience when someone

close to them dies. It is a relaxed, fun environment where children are helped to develop strategies to cope with their grief.

- **Educational support for parents of bereaved children.** This is offered to parents whose children attend the bereavement weekend.

- **Parenting bereaved children.**

This programme helps parents to care for children who are bereaved through the death of a parent. It takes place over four weeks with each session lasting two hours.

- **Therapeutic work with families** based on their individual needs.

- **Blue Christmas**

This annual event for adults and children acknowledges that Christmas can be a painful, difficult or lonely time when you are newly-bereaved. Through poetry and music, this event provides support and offers strategies to help cope with grief at Christmas.

If you would like an invitation to a Remembrance Evening, or any other bereavement event, you will need to complete a *Keeping In Touch* form. This is available in the bereavement pack or from the social work department.

For more information please contact the Bereavement Support Team in the Social Work Department.

Harold's Cross and Blackrock: 01 406 8750

Wicklow: 01 406 8888

Email: bereavementsupport@ohl.ie



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www.ohl.ie

CHY 1144 | RCN 20001827 | Company No. 352404