



We provide fun, challenge and adventure to over 400,000 girls and boys across the UK

Bereavement

What is bereavement?

The loss of a close relative is an uncommon experience for younger people and it can present a particular challenge for Scout leaders.

Grief reactions can also be experienced following the death of friends or distant relatives, the death of a parent, divorce, and other life events such as moving house. In a way such experiences act as preparatory for life.

Bereavement may bring with it many far-reaching changes in a person's material life including loss of a home, for example.

Coping with bereavement

Initially the reaction will be one of shock, which can last from a few hours to some days. The bereaved person may not comprehend what has occurred, seem free from distress and act as if nothing has happened. They may cry or to speak about their loss and they may be incapable of organising their daily routine.

Next comes an acceptance of what has happened which can last for days, weeks or a few months. Emotional reactions such as distress, weeping, self-reproach and guilt, helplessness and despair, and irrational behaviour may occur.

Then may come a time of idealisation where the bereaved person looks back with 'rose-tinted spectacles'. Underlying anger or guilt may be expressed. Such a reaction may cause considerable difficulties where there has been a separation or divorce.

Finally adjustment will follow. After some months the emotional storm begins to subside. The bereaved person has a realistic view of events.

Practical Tips

It is important to understand the process through which the bereaved person is passing. It cannot be forced and to 'look on the bright side' is worthless.

In the early phases, simple physical presence may be all that is required. The nearness of a sympathetic person is not necessary to say or do much, just be there offering support. Try to provide a secure situation for the bereaved person to weep or talk. This needs to be done sensitively, in privacy, away from the minimal fuss.

It is easy to underestimate how long the normal reactions may last. Two years is not an unusual period. Birthdays, Christmas and at anniversaries is helpful. Some young people who have difficulty expressing their grief by behaving erratically.

Younger children may display their grief in a different way to adults. Emotion may be expressed in a way that is not normal behaviour. Some adults may find this disconcerting.

The bereaved family may need the support of a number of concerned adults - leaders can share sympathetic listening. A sensitive approach is required. Sympathy should be expressed simply a

Sometimes the individual concerned may turn to a Leader they trust to express feelings of guilt, but do not press them. Respect the need for confidentiality. Allow tears. Do not proffer advice. L necessary expression of emotion by the bereaved person.

A bereaved person may find it valuable to maintain their usual contact with the Group. Alternativ while. Either choice should be accepted without question, although a prolonged absence should p person may feel too embarrassed to return and need reassurance of their welcome.

It is always hard when a child dies. Where this has been unexpected due to an accident or sudden the most intense whilst parents of children who have coped with a disabling and ultimately fatal emotional difficulties. Some parents may wish to sever all links with their child's past life whilst c involvement. Obviously leaders need to treat such situations sensitively and supportively.

It may be that the death was expected due to a limited life expectancy or a life-threatening conc people in the Group may need help with their inevitable fears.

Supporting the bereaved is a difficult task. Leaders who attempt it need support in turn. It might opportunities for the adults concerned to share their feelings. Talking about anxieties and emotio the District team, or a Faith adviser can be helpful.

What else do I need to know?

Even very young children have a pretty clear idea of what death means. All will have encountered may not, however, understand the concept of spiritual life associated with physical death.

Children are particularly apt to yearn for the deceased, to fantasise about their return and nouris occur. Bereaved children are particularly prone to feelings of guilt. They may blame themselves i healthily eager to hear more about the deceased and to amplify their picture of them.

Children's grief is more unlikely to follow the usual pattern than that of adults, because they are have less knowledge of the processes of life and death. They may be misled by figures of speech equipped to express emotions verbally. They live more in the present than adults.

Support Organisations

[The Child Bereavement Trust \(http://www.childbereavement.org.uk\)](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk)

(t) 0845 357 1000, (e) [enquiries@childbereavement.org.uk \(mailto:enquiries@childbereavement.org.uk\)](mailto:enquiries@childbereavement.org.uk)

[Child Death Helpline \(http://www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk\)](http://www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk)

(t) 0800 282986,

[Cruse Bereavement Care \(http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk\)](http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk)

(t) 0870 167 1677, (e) [helpline@crusebereavementcare.org.uk \(mailto:helpline@crusebereavementcare.org.uk\)](mailto:helpline@crusebereavementcare.org.uk)

[Winstons Wish \(winstonswish.org.uk\)](http://winstonswish.org.uk)

(t) 08452 03 04 05, (e) [info@winstonswish.org.uk \(mailto:info@winstonswish.org.uk\)](mailto:info@winstonswish.org.uk)

© Copyright The Scout Association 2014. All Rights Reserved.
Charity Numbers 306101 (England and Wales) and SC038437 (Scotland)
Registered address: The Scout Association, Gilwell Park, Chingford, London, Engl: