

Coping with bereavement, grief and loss

National Safety Team

May 2020

Bereavement, grief and loss during the COVID -19 pandemic

Whenever the loss of a friend or loved one happens, it can be an extremely difficult and challenging time. This is likely to be even more so for those experiencing bereavement and grief during COVID-19 which has dramatically impacted on how we grieve the loss of a loved one.

Not only those who are already struggling with bereavement, but also those whose relatives or friends die through other causes will also be affected.

If someone close to you has died, this leaflet may help you to make sense of some of the physical and emotional feelings that you may be experiencing.

You can also find more information on where to seek support if you want to talk to someone.

What is grief and loss?

When we are faced with a loss, our natural response is to grieve. Any loss can cause grief, and the more significant the loss, the more intense the feelings may be.

What might you be experiencing?

Feelings of loss and grief are very personal, however the following emotions and physical feelings are very common:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Pain and sadness | Fatigue |
| Shock and disbelief | Nausea/loss of appetite |
| Guilt | Difficulty sleeping |
| Anger and frustration | Aches and pains |
| Fear | Feeling unwell |

What are the stages of grief?

Denial – Anger – Bargaining – Depression – Acceptance

These are known as the stages of grief, and it is normal to feel these things. They will usually pass in time. Not everyone experiences these in the order in which they are set out. You may find you move back and forth between stages, such as between anger and depression.

Ultimately, there is no right way to grieve and it is different for everyone.

Be kind to yourself

* Try to eat properly and to rest, even if you can’t sleep.
* Give yourself time and allow yourself to grieve.
* Take it one day at a time and allow yourself to feel these feelings of loss and grief. This can help you to adjust and move forward.
* Don’t be embarrassed about crying.
* Try to keep to familiar routines that give a sense of order and control. Set yourself small, realistic goals.
* Do things that help you relax.

Reaching out for support

You do not have to go through this alone. It is important now, more than ever, to reach out for support.

Many people find it helpful to talk about what has happened and how they feel. This can be an important part of the healing process.

Keep in contact with those who you are close to. You could call, Skype or Face time them and have a chat.

Support can come from a variety sources and although it will often be from family and friends you can also talk to others such as your GP, a counsellor or bereavement support organisation, particularly if you are finding it difficult for you to function at home or at work.

Support for HMPPS staff

There are many different sources of support also available to you in the workplace.

As well as talking to your line manager, talking things through with your colleagues can help.

**Staff Care Teams**

Care Teams are a vital part of supporting staff wellbeing in prisons. They can provide you with practical advice and guidance on how to access information and further sources of support which may benefit you at this time. To find out more speak to your local care team.

**The Chaplaincy**

Your local prison chaplaincy team is available to support you and will be happy to listen and to talk through anything that may be troubling you regardless of your faith. To find out more speak to your prison chaplain.

**Trauma Risk Management (TRiM)**

The TRiM service is available to members of prison staff who have experienced a potentially traumatic event. TRiM Practitioners have undergone specific training to enable them to understand the impact that a traumatic event can have on a person.

They are not counsellors or therapists but can listen confidentially and offer sensible practical advice with no critique or stigma. If you would like more information contact: TRiM.SafetyGroup@justice.gov.uk

**Employee Assistance**

Our employee assistance provider, PAM Assist, offers telephone or online advice and support to staff.

The PAM Assist helpline **0800 019 8988** is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The website (**www.pam-assist.com**) can be accessed at work or at home. PAM Assist can also be accessed through the link in MyHub.

<https://hmpps.myhub.sscl.com/hmpps-connect/i-am-an-employee/Working-here/employee-assistance-programme-services>

Once on the website, sign in to ‘My PAM Assist’ using the following log in details:

**Username: HMPPS Password: HMPPS1**

National Helplines

There are lots of organisations who can help you if you want to talk to someone, or who have lots of practical information on their websites. Here are the details of some national helplines that you may wish to try.

**Child Bereavement UK**

[www.childbereavementuk.org](https://www.childbereavementuk.org/)

Freephone 0800 028 8840

**Cruse**

[www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)

Freephone 0808 808 1677

Cruse have also developed a useful resource offering advice, support and information covering all aspects of bereavement which is available on their website: [Signposting pack](https://www.cruse.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploaded_files/Cruse%20YouBeU%20Signposting%20Pack.pdf)

**Samaritans**

[www.samaritans.org](https://www.samaritans.org/)

Freephone 116 123