

Managing Difficult Times

Grief is an individual journey, made up of different feelings and experiences, that for many people endures but changes as time goes on. There is no right way to grieve for everyone. We each may have different ways of expressing our emotions or managing the distress of loss. There may be times that grief feels more intense, often when we are reminded, sometimes unexpectedly, of our loss. There are also dates, occasions, or events which we can expect and predict, with a connection to our special person. At and around these dates can be a particularly difficult time in mourning.

What Are Difficult Times?

Difficult times are predictable events when grief may be more intense, due to the connection of that time to your loved one. Examples might include:

- Birthdays – their birthday, and the birthdays of family members as this person are no longer physically here to be part of that special day.
- Anniversaries – this may be the anniversary of their death, their funeral or other dates that were significant such as a wedding anniversary.
- Holidays and Special Occasions – New Year's Day, religious holidays, Mother's Day, Father's Day – celebration days and days where your family had special traditions.
- Family holidays.

Some difficult times may be shared by the whole family and some may be very personal and specific to your relationship with your loved one. During these difficult times, you may find yourself thinking of your loved one more frequently, and memories may come into your mind. You may find your mood changes: you could be more irritable, or more tearful, or feel tense and anxious. You may find you have trouble with sleeping, or your appetite changes. It can help to notice these changes, and understand they are a natural part of grief.



What May Help?

Identify and Plan for Difficult Times

It may help to get a calendar and mark on the times throughout the year which you think will be especially difficult. Have a think about which days may be the most challenging, and which may be more manageable. Create a list of the days which may be the most difficult.

Accept that there will be more difficult times, including these special occasions, and this is normal in grieving. Give yourself permission to find these times hard. Give yourself permission to feel what you feel, and need more than usual, and that be ok.

Plan activities that are meaningful and will help. This may be commemorative things to do, such as visiting the grave, going through a memory book or having a family meal. You may develop a family ritual, such as lighting a candle or placing a stone in a special place. You may want to honour your loved one by doing something they enjoyed, like watching their favourite film or visiting a place they liked. You may not want to carry out any commemorative activities, especially if your feelings for the deceased are complicated. You may instead want to plan activities that keep you busy, that help you look after yourself and keep yourself strong and resilient.

Connect with Others Around You

Stay connected to your usual support networks at this time and let them know when a difficult time is approaching. Let them know how they could help – by talking with you, or spending time together doing something you enjoy. Let them know if you need some space and to not talk about it but keeping them in the loop ensures they understand what you need and how they can help.

Schedule time together. Plan activities or agree a phone catch-up. Knowing you will be seeing or speaking with people who support you, may give you reassurance and help you feel less alone.

Share stories and reminisce together. This can feel like honouring the life of the deceased and acknowledging their importance in your life. When there are many painful memories of your loved one, it may be hard to think of happy memories: they could feel blocked or bring with them more difficult memories and feelings.

However, sometimes recognising with someone else that you have been reminded of them, can lessen feelings of isolation. Sharing memories together reminds you that you are not alone in grieving.



Let there be someone that you can be honest with; open up about your feelings; someone you can confide in if things feel increasingly difficult.

Take Care of Yourself and Others

Experiencing a difficult time can have a big impact on our emotional wellbeing. It is important to consider how you and your family take care of yourselves and each other around these times. Here are some ideas:

- Have realistic expectations of yourself and others. You may get less done. You may make mistakes. Go easy on yourself and each other.
- Allow yourself to feel your feelings.
- Practice self-care. Take time to do soothing activities that suit you: go for a walk, have a relaxing bath, make time for things which make you feel you have invested in yourself.
- Plan some activities which give you pleasure and enjoyment. It can be good to have something to look forward to. You may find doing a fun planned activity with family members is a helpful way to comfort each other.



Who Else Can Help?

Reach out for more support if needed.

Below is a list of organisations offering bereavement support services:

Cruse Bereavement Care – Bereavement Charity

Tel: **0808 808 1677** Website: <https://www.cruse.org.uk>

Mind – Mental Health Charity, for information and support with mental health

Tel: **0300 123 3393** Website: <https://www.mind.org.uk>

Winston's Wish – Childhood Bereavement Charity

Tel: **08088 020 021** Website: <https://www.winstonswish.org>

Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide – Support services for those bereaved by suicide.

Tel: **0300 111 5065** Website: <https://uksobs.org/>

For Urgent Support

If you or someone else are at immediate risk of harm to themselves or others, please contact your **GP** or **local A&E**. Alternatively, you can call **NHS Crisis Team** by dialling **111** and selecting option 2 - 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

