



Grief/Bereavement Guidance

Introduction

The purpose of this guidance document is to provide staff with information on welfare and support systems in place for Transforming Futures (TFT) employees relating to the handling of grief, bereavement, and loss. If you are feeling like you need support, please know that there are people around you to help. Internally within the Trust this can come in the form of any of the below;

- Your line manager or SLT
- HR Team are available on:
 - Aaron Maclean – aaron.maclean@transformingfutures.org.uk / 07851246359
 - Dani Peck – danielle.peck@transformingfutures.org.uk / 07593437778
 - Marie Davey - marie.davey@transformingfutures.org.uk / 07394560065
 - Tracey Savage tracey.savage@transformingfutures.org.uk / 07801587412

- Mental Health First Aiders [MHFA]

A mental health first aider's role in the workplace is to act as a first point of contact for people with mental health issues, providing support and guidance to their colleagues. In our arrangement with Delt Shared Services our staff have access to additional support from members of the Delt team who are experienced Mental Health First Aiders; a benefit of speaking with someone from Delt is that they are impartial and can offer confidential support and advice independently from the Trust.

Mental Health First Aider team members are;

Hannah Ling Hannah.Ling@deltservices.co.uk
Lindsey Daw Lindsey.Daw@deltservices.co.uk
Nicholas Jennison Nicholas.Jennison@deltservices.co.uk

- Health Shield Services:

The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is available to all staff, you will need your membership number (individual to each member of staff) which you will have received a welcome email from Health Shield with this on. If you cannot locate this then call the HR team and we will be able to provide this for you.

The EAP service are open 24/7. The 24/7 helpline offers practical information and emotional support on a range of issues. To access;

- The EAP service please call: 0800 028 1963 or
- GP Anytime - Call 0345 319 6462 and quote 'Schools UK' and your membership number
- Counselling services are also available through Health Shield and can provide; structured telephone counselling, and up to 8 face-to-face counselling sessions.

What is Bereavement?

Bereavement is the experience of losing someone important to us. It is characterised by grief, which is the process and the range of emotions we go through as we gradually adjust to the loss.

Losing someone important to us can be emotionally devastating and it is natural to go through a range of physical and emotional processes as we gradually come to terms with the loss. Bereavement affects everyone in different ways, and it's possible to experience any range of emotions. There is no right or wrong way to feel.

What are some common feelings after someone dies?

Pain: Feelings of pain and distress following bereavement can be overwhelming and very frightening. You may also be in shock and feelings can develop at a later stage.

Anger :Sometimes bereaved people can feel angry. This anger is a completely natural emotion, typical of the grieving process. Death can seem cruel and unfair, especially when you feel someone has died before their time or when you had plans for the future together. We may also feel angry towards the person who has died, or angry at ourselves for things we did or didn't do or say to the person before their death.

Guilt: Guilt is another common reaction. People who have been bereaved of someone close often say they feel directly or indirectly to blame for the person's death. You may also feel guilty if you had a difficult or confusing relationship with the person who has died, or if you feel you didn't do enough to help them when they were alive.

Depression: Many bereaved people experience feelings of depression following the death of someone close. Life can feel like it no longer holds any meaning, and some people say they too want to die. It is normal to feel like you don't want to go on living after someone very precious to you dies.

Shock, Denial or Disbelief: It is natural for your mind to try to protect you from pain, so following a loss some people may find that they feel quite numb about what has happened. Shock provides emotional protection from becoming overwhelmed, especially during the early stages of grief, and it can last a long time.

"The pain doesn't vanish, and we shouldn't have to hide it, especially from those closest to us".

For general support with bereavement see below:

Internal Support

- Contact your line manager or a member of Senior Leadership Team (SLT)
- Contact a member of HR (Contact details at the top of this page)
- Contact HEALTH SHIELD for 24/7 help or take up their counselling sessions

External Support

- **CRUSE:** Cruse Bereavement Care is the leading national charity for bereaved people in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
[Click here](#) or call the helpline on **0808 808 1677**
- **MIND:** MIND provide advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem. The Charity campaigns to improve services, raise awareness and promote understanding.
Call the info line on **0300 123 3393** or [click here](#) for more information and support
- **SAMARITANS:** Are a Charity available day or night, for anyone who's struggling to cope, who needs someone to listen without judgement or pressure. Providing advice for people on ways to cope and the skills to be there for others.
Call 116 123 24.

Losing someone to suicide

Every type of grief has the potential to cause intense and complex feelings, but research shows that people bereaved by suicide can have a particularly complex set of feelings and can experience additional struggles and dilemmas in trying to resolve their grief. It's important that you know that there is support available and within the TFT family there is always someone available to talk confidentially.

Feelings you might experience when you lose someone to suicide include intense sadness, shock, anger, frustration, confusion, and isolation. Some people also talk about experiencing a sense of shame or guilt, and while this is a very common reaction it is important to remember that the reasons for suicide are complex and you are not to blame.

Questioning 'why?' and 'what if?': It can be very difficult not to question why the person chose to do what they did, or whether it could have been prevented in some way. Last conversations can play over and over in your head. It can be difficult to come to terms with questions that could only be answered by the person who has died.

Rejection: You may feel that the person who died rejected you or your help, or that your love and care was ignored by them. Feeling that you were not enough can be very painful.

[Click here to read a personal account from someone learning to cope after losing a friend to suicide](#)

What specialist help is available?

Many people bereaved by suicide find that they need more specific support than that provided for bereavement in general and can find it particularly valuable to make use of support groups that are especially designed for people bereaved by suicide.

In addition to the support options mentioned on our support and self-care page, you might like to consider the following:

- Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide (SOBS) are a great source of support for people who have been bereaved by suicide. See the [SOBS website](#) for details of their helpline.
- Cruse Bereavement Care - [Coping when someone dies by suicide | Cruse Bereavement Care](#)
- MIND - [Losing someone to suicide | Mind](#)
- Sudden – For sudden bereavement help call 0800 2600 400 or visit [About sudden death - Sudden](#)

How to cope with loss through suicide:

What might help?

Expressing your feelings and thoughts – talking about how you feel or writing down your thoughts and feelings.

Making opportunities to remember – looking at pictures, visiting meaningful places, talking, writing, creating a memory box, etc.

Developing 'rituals' – creating lasting memorials or acts such as lighting a candle at a certain time each week.

Participating in activities – when you are strong enough, going back to activities and pastimes you enjoy.

Looking after yourself – eating as well as you can, and getting enough rest.

Spending time outside – sometimes just a walk can help.

What might not help?

Avoiding talking about what has happened – it can be hard to start but talking with someone you trust can really make a difference.

Drinking more or taking drugs – it can be tempting to blot out what has happened, but it can also make you feel worse afterwards.

Taking risks – if you are feeling that there is little point in life then you can find yourself taking risks with your own health or safety. Try to talk to someone if you feel like this.

Not seeking help – it can be hard to ask for help, sometimes people feel they don't deserve it or shouldn't need it. But it is important to reach out and talk to someone, be it friends and family, your doctor, Cruse, or other organisations who can help.

How long does grief last?

There is no time limit on grief, and this varies hugely person to person. The time spent in a period of bereavement will be different for everybody and depends on factors such as the type of relationship, the strength of attachment or intimacy to the person who died, the situation surrounding their death, and the amount of time spent anticipating the death.

For more on the grief cycle: [What does grief feel like? | Mind](#)

“I have lost friends and family – each bereavement has been different, but it has all been a learning process. It is crucial that people know where to turn to”.

How can you help other people?

If you know a friend is feeling anxious, you could suggest talking about something else for a while. Even if you cannot meet in person try to keep in contact as isolation can make it difficult for some people to cope.

Talk about the person who died: When a person dies it can feel like they are erased from people's memories. While you may fear that talking about the deceased person will just bring up painful feelings, many people actually appreciate the opportunity to talk a bit about the memory of the person, finding this a comfort and a way of integrating the memory of the person who has died into their life, rather than pushing memories away. "What's your favourite memory of [the person who has died]?" or "Tell me about a time [the person who has died] made you laugh" can be useful.

Focus on listening: Try to respect what the bereaved person is choosing to share with you and focus on listening rather than finding out more. Give the bereaved person space to open up if they want to, while also being sensitive if they would rather not take it further.

Be sensitive when discussing the death with others: Other people around the family or friendship group may not know about the death so it can be useful to think about and agree how best to talk about what has happened, what details are appropriate to disclose, and with whom.

Use non-stigmatising language: When referring to suicide try to use words like "died by suicide" or "took their life", rather than the outdated expression "committed suicide", which dates back to when suicide used to be a crime.

Avoid speculating about the suicide: Suggesting or speculating about explanations for a suicide could make somebody feel blamed and also risks over-simplifying what causes suicide.

Connect with others

- **Let others know how you're feeling:** Tell people what you find helpful and let them know when you are finding things difficult. It's okay to ask others to be with you if you need them.
- **Seek support:** If you're not already receiving support or don't feel the support you have is helpful, take a look at the useful contacts section for a list of organisations who might be able to help.
- **Try peer support:** It can be helpful to talk with others who are also currently coping with a loss or have experienced grief in the past.

External support available

Helpful info for employees

CALM: <https://www.thecalmzone.net/>

National Suicide Prevention Alliance

The National Suicide Prevention Alliance (NSPA) is an alliance of public, private, and voluntary organisations in England who care about suicide prevention and are willing to take individual and collective action to reduce suicide and support those bereaved or affected by suicide.

[National Suicide Prevention Alliance](#)

The Samaritans are a support group available for whatever you are going through they are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and can be contacted on:

Tel: 116 123 (UK,ROI) or by;

Email: jo@samaritans.org or click here [Write an email | Samaritans](#)

International Association for Suicide Prevention

[International Association for Suicide Prevention](#)

Helpful info for Line Managers and Colleagues

<https://forwardforlife.org/help-is-at-hand/>

The 'Help Is at Hand' guidance document is particularly useful for Managers and colleagues looking to provide 'long arm' support to someone who may have lost someone to suicide.

<https://forwardforlife.org/resources/>

For additional resources

It's safe to talk about suicide [Leaflet]

[MAR21 Its safe to talk about suicide](#)