

- **Say goodbye in your own way.** If someone has died there may be a funeral or service. Think about whether or not you want to go. Some people find it helps. Other people find different ways to say goodbye; drawing a picture, writing a letter, taking flowers, saying a prayer, visiting the site, planning something as a memorial.
- **Remember the good times.** At first you may feel you only think about the bad thing that has happened. Over time you will come to remember happy things. Share these memories with your friends and family. These are the memories you will want to hold on to in the future.

There are some very good websites for young people who have experienced loss and bereavement. These include:

www.foryoungpeople.winstonswish.org.uk
www.hopeagain.org.uk

Coping with bereavement

A guide for young people



All publications can be made available in audio tape, large print and Braille, or alternative languages on request.

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Working together for a strong and successful Dorset



Dorset County Council

Understanding what has happened

When something really bad happens, a death, an accident, an assault, everyone feels upset. Your feelings and experience are personal to you. Remember, other people are upset too. It can help everyone to share our feelings and worries at times like this. People may show their feelings in different ways. Sometimes our feelings are quite confused. We may be angry one minute and sad the next. It takes time to come to terms with the shock.

It is important to try to understand exactly what happened. Rumours can spread easily and can cause unnecessary hurt. Try to get it clear in your own mind. Worrying and imagining can make things seem even worse. If you need to ask questions to understand what happened, speak to an adult you trust. Talking to other people can help you and them.

Do's and don'ts

- **Do** talk about your feelings
- **Don't** bottle them up
- **Do** tell your friends and family how you would like them to help you
- **Don't** be afraid to say anything in case you might make other people upset
- **Do** give others a chance to tell you how they feel
- **Do** be kind to yourself as well as to others

Understanding your feelings

We may feel all sorts of emotions at a stressful time like this. This is quite natural; most of us do not know what to expect. Some of our feelings may surprise us or make us feel guilty.

These feelings are common:

- **disbelief** It is hard to believe this has happened
- **helplessness** Finding it difficult to do anything
- **distress** That you cannot recover past happiness
- **fear** Of something else bad happening
- **anxiety** About breaking down or "losing control"
- **guilt** Wishing you could have changed things
- **anger** Wanting to blame someone or something
- **shame** For not having reacted as you would wish
- **confusion** Nothing seems the same any more
- **forgetfulness** Finding it hard to concentrate
- **exhaustion** Feeling tired and drained all the time
- **feeling tense** Finding it difficult to relax
- **feeling alone** As though no-one else understands

There may be mood swings from happy to sad. Even feeling happy for a time can make you feel guilty. Don't worry if your feelings don't seem to make much sense for a little while. Give yourself time and share your feelings with others. You may find that you keep needing to think about what has happened; you talk about it, you dream about it. This is one way of working through the problem. It helps to get the hurt out. Don't worry, this stage won't last forever.

Things that may help

- **Talk to someone.** If you feel you want to talk to someone, do. This could be friends, family or any other adult you feel comfortable with. Many schools in Dorset have Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs) who have had training in supporting young people following bereavement.
- **Give yourself time.** The feelings that you have in the early stages help you to deal with what has happened. Your mind may need time to fully accept it. Don't deny your feelings. Talking to others may help. Your feelings will change over time.
- **Find things to do.** Helping others or keeping to some sort of normal routine can be a relief. Sometimes people let their feelings out by doing things; taking the dog for a run, drawing a picture, going out with friends. Getting back to a normal life doesn't mean you don't care.
- **Take one day at a time.** Don't try to set yourself a timetable for getting over things. Some days may be easier than others.