

Bereavement



Who we are

Age Scotland is the national charity for older people. We work to improve the lives of everyone over the age of 50 and promote their rights and interests.

Our vision is a Scotland which is the best place in the world to grow older.

Our mission is to inspire, involve and empower older people in Scotland, and influence others, so that people enjoy better later lives.

We have three strategic aims:



We help older people to be as well as they can be



We promote a positive view of ageing and later life



We tackle loneliness and isolation

How we can help

We know that growing older doesn't come with a manual. Later life can bring changes and opportunities to your life and you may need to know about rights, organisations and services which are unfamiliar to you.

That's why we provide free information and advice to help you on a range of topics including benefits and entitlements, social care, legal issues such as Power of Attorney, housing and much more. All of our guides are available to download for free from our website, or you can contact our helpline team to have copies posted to you for free.

Our **helpline** is a free, confidential phone service for older people, their carers and families in Scotland looking for information and advice.

Later life can bring times when you just need someone to talk to. Our **friendship line** is part of our wider helpline and older people can call us for a chat. We're here to listen, provide friendship and offer support.



Call us free on: 0800 12 44 222
(Monday – Friday, 9am – 5pm)



Visit agescotland.org.uk
to find out more.

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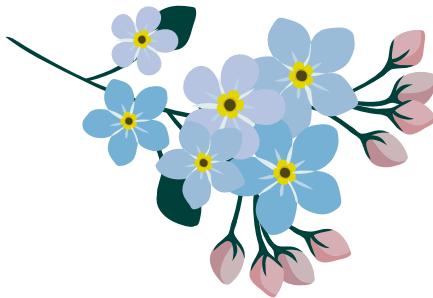
Introduction

The death of someone close to you can be one of the hardest things you will ever have to go through. It is not something you can be good or bad at. It is just something you have to deal with as best you can.

How you deal with death is very personal and there is no formula. However, this guide can explain:

- practical things you may need to sort out
- how you might be feeling
- why you might be feeling this way
- some of the things that could help you, now and in the future.

You may not want to read this guide now and could decide to come back to it at a different time. You may also want to look at it with someone close to you, or with a bereavement counsellor.





Practical things to sort out

Following the death of someone close to you there are certain practical things that need to be done quickly. These include registering the death, arranging a funeral and looking at the instructions in the Will. If you are working, it can be useful to speak to your employer about what has happened. Time off to deal with family emergencies is normally unpaid but some employers will offer paid compassionate leave.

Some people find that being busy is a welcome distraction. Others find it difficult to take the actions and make the decisions that are needed.

The Scottish Government publication **What to do after a death in Scotland** guides you through the practical and legal steps you need to take after someone has died. It is available on the Scottish Government website at **www.gov.scot/collections/what-to-do-after-a-death-in-scotland**, or just call the Age Scotland helpline on **0800 12 44 222** and we will send you a copy.

Coping with a bereavement

As you get older, it is more likely that you will experience a bereavement. This may be the death of your parents, friends, a partner or even a child. While each of these losses can be devastating, the way you react and cope with each bereavement is likely to be different depending on the circumstances and your relationship with the person who has died.

Coping with a bereavement is a very personal process and it can take some time. The emotions you may experience can feel overwhelming at times, but things do get easier. Talking to someone you trust, a family member or a professional such as your doctor or a bereavement counsellor, is often the best way to start feeling better.



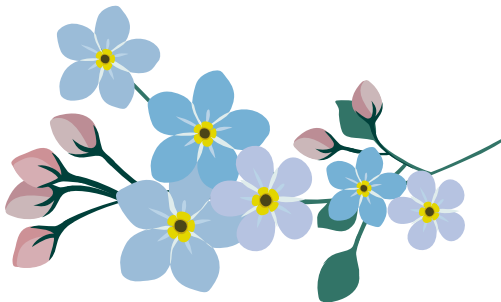
Dealing with grief

Grief is the often conflicting and sometimes overwhelming mixture of emotions you experience when someone close to you dies. Understanding these emotions can be difficult, but it is important to accept them and be reassured by the fact that there is no right or wrong way to feel. Though everyone grieves, each of us does so in our own way.

Grief is natural and can last a long time. It often comes and goes and feelings may sneak up on you when you least expect them to. How you feel can be influenced by a number of things such as your personality, your relationship with the person who has died, your life experiences, your religious beliefs and your cultural background.

Whatever grief is to you, talking to those close to you can really help. If you find it hard to talk to family or friends, you may feel more comfortable speaking to a professional grief counsellor, who can help you to deal with your loss.

Cruse Bereavement Care Scotland may be able to help. You can call them on **0808 802 6161** or contact them through their website **www.crusescotland.org.uk**.





How you might be feeling

The emotions you experience as you grieve can be intense, and you might feel some more strongly than others. There might be days when you cope better, and days when the feelings seem overwhelming.

There is no right or wrong way to feel, and the process of grieving is different for everyone. With time, and the right support, emotions experienced after bereavement tend to become less difficult to manage, as you start to adjust and come to terms with your loss.

You may feel:

Numb: many people talk of feeling a sense of numbness and disbelief soon after a death. You might feel shocked and dazed, even if the death was expected.

Angry: you might feel angry at the person who died for abandoning you, or at yourself if you have regrets. You may feel anger towards those around you for how they are reacting, even knowing that everyone deals with bereavement differently. If you have religious beliefs, you may feel angry at your faith, and even be questioning it. You might feel angry and not know why; this is also perfectly natural.

Dealing with anger can be difficult; it might help to write down your thoughts or talk to someone you trust.

Frightened: fear and anxiety are very natural emotions. You may feel that you're struggling to control your thoughts or feelings, or have panic attacks, which are not dangerous but can be very distressing. Speak to your GP if you are struggling to cope with these feelings.



Guilty: you may feel you could have done more to help, or regret something you said or did not say. It is easy to focus on the negatives, but try not to be too hard on yourself. With time, you are likely to be able to accept what has happened.

If your sense of guilt doesn't go away or becomes more powerful, it is a good idea to speak to someone who specialises in bereavement support.

Loneliness: if the person who has died was your main source of social contact, or if you were caring for them, your life may suddenly have lost its structure. This could leave you feeling very lonely. Try to find ways to connect with family and friends, and to gradually create new routines when you feel ready. If you are struggling with loneliness, call the **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222**. We can keep in touch with regular friendship calls or put you in contact with local support organisations.

Relief: if the person had been very ill or was in pain before their death, it is natural to feel relieved that they are no longer suffering. You may also feel relief if you were caring for them and no longer have this responsibility.

If they lived with dementia, you might already have been grieving for them as their condition progressed. You may feel relieved that they are gone so you can remember them as they used to be. You may also feel relief if the person who has died used to bully or abuse you. Whatever the reasons, a grief counsellor will understand your feelings and can help you to work through them.



Empty and sad: after a bereavement, feelings of emptiness and sadness may be intense and can often come in waves; some days or weeks might be easier to cope with than others. These feelings are natural, and are part of the healing process, even if you don't realise this at the time.

If these feelings don't begin to lessen with time, or if you are struggling to look after yourself, speak to your doctor. Experiencing depression is common after losing someone you are close to, and help is available, so don't struggle alone.

If you feel you might hurt yourself, talk to someone as soon as possible. You can talk to your doctor or:

- **Samaritans: 116 123** (any time, day or night)
- **Breathing Space: 0800 83 85 87 / breathingspace.scot**
(open Mon–Thurs 6pm–2am, Fri 6pm–Mon 6am)
- **SHOUT:** text the word **Shout** to **8525**
(24 hours a day, 7 days a week)
www.giveusashout.org





Looking after yourself

Bereavement can have a physical as well as an emotional impact. Complex emotions can leave you feeling drained, unmotivated and closed off. Although it can feel difficult and sometimes pointless, it is important to do what you can to look after yourself:

Sleep and rest: bereavement is exhausting. Be kind to yourself and sleep when you can or want to. You may struggle to sleep or your sleep may be disrupted, but rest and recharge whenever you can. Speak to your doctor if a lack of sleep is affecting your ability to function.

Eating and drinking: try to eat and drink regularly to stay as healthy as you can. Even if you have no appetite and food is the last thing on your mind, eating anything is better than eating nothing. See Age Scotland's **Eat Well guide** for advice and help.

For some, drink can go from being a comfort to being an escape, so be careful not to have more alcohol than is recommended. If your drinking or someone else's is becoming unhealthy, talk to a specialist organisation such as:

- **Alcoholics Anonymous:** 0800 9177 650 / www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk
- **Drinkaware** www.drinkaware.co.uk
- **Drinkline Scotland:** 0800 7314 314
- **WithYou:** 0800 12 44 222 / www.wearewithyou.org.uk



Don't neglect yourself: it may be difficult to stick to everyday routines as you grieve. You might struggle with things like showering or bathing, keeping appointments or washing up. If you don't manage to settle back into healthy routines, speak to your doctor to see what they suggest.

Stay connected: you might want some time to yourself for a while as you grieve, but try not to stay isolated for too long. This can affect your confidence in the long run. Stay connected with friends and family and ask for support if you need it.

Some people find their faith is a great comfort, and that their place of worship is a source of social, emotional and spiritual support.





Past bereavements

If you have experienced the death of someone close to you before, you may think you know what to expect. However, some emotions may be stronger after the death of certain people, or you may experience emotions you haven't felt before.

Bereavement can bring memories of past losses flooding back, including times when you did not have the support you needed – maybe after a miscarriage or a suicide at a time when those issues were not talked about. You may feel the need to mourn past losses before you can start to cope with your more recent bereavement. Talk to friends and family, your doctor or a bereavement counsellor.

There are specialist organisations you can contact, for example:

- **Sands** offers support to those who have experienced the death of a baby, whether recently or long ago.
0808 164 3332 / www.sands.org.uk
- **The Compassionate Friends** supports bereaved parents and their families. **0345 123 2304 / www.tcf.org.uk**
- **SSAFA**, the Armed Forces charity, specialises in helping those who have served or have lost someone who served.
0800 260 6767 / www.ssafa.org.uk/scotland
- **Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide** provides a volunteer-led support line. **0300 111 5065 / www.uksobs.com**



Those around you

Family dynamics at times of bereavement can be difficult to navigate. Although you are all dealing with the loss of the same person, everyone grieves in their own way. It is likely you will each need different types of support at different times.

However, family can be a great source of support too. Talking to each other and sharing memories is often the main way people start to accept the loss and begin to feel better.

Speaking to young children can be difficult, especially if it is the first time they have experienced a bereavement. Although it can be hard, it is important to be open and honest, and to answer their questions as best you can.

Winston's Wish supports children and young people after the death of a parent or sibling. Call them on **08088 020021** or visit **www.winstonswish.org**.



If your spouse, partner or civil partner has died

Losing the person you shared your life with can be especially difficult to deal with. It may seem that you don't have anyone you can talk to about your emotions, or you may feel lonely and isolated.

Don't be afraid to reach out to friends and family if you can. They will likely want to help but may not know if you are ready to talk. There are helplines you can call to speak to someone who understands what you are going through. Your GP may also be able to suggest local support services to help you cope with the loss.

If you relied on your partner for things such as cooking, shopping, looking after money or dealing with repairs around the home, you may be able to get practical help from the organisations below:

- **The Age Scotland helpline: 0800 12 44 222**
- **MoneyHelper: 0800 138 7777 /**
www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/family-and-care/death-and-bereavement
- **Citizens Advice Scotland's Money Talk Team:**
0800 028 1456 /
www.moneytalkteam.org.uk
- **Care and Repair Scotland:**
www.careandrepairscotland.co.uk or call the Age Scotland helpline on **0800 12 44 222** for help finding your local number.

Age Scotland's information guides contain information and practical advice on a wide range of topics. To order free copies, call our helpline on **0800 12 44 222** or visit **www.age.scot/publications**.



Looking ahead

Try not to make any important decisions too soon. You may want to move house or change a relationship, but give yourself plenty of time and don't feel pressured by others.

You may find it difficult to look forward. Some people feel guilty about having hope and planning for the future. However, this is not a betrayal, or a substitute for the life you had with the person who has died.

When you feel ready, spend time with those close to you and give yourself things to look forward to, like a day out with a friend or a weekend away. If you find you are enjoying yourself there is no need to feel guilty. This is an important part of recovery and doesn't mean you cared for the person who has died any less.

Birthdays, anniversaries and other important dates can be difficult. You might want to plan to do things on those dates to celebrate good memories, or you may want to be on your own.

When you feel ready, you might like to start introducing new things into your routine, especially if the person who has died was your main companion. You could try a coffee morning, activity group or volunteering.

Being around other people may feel strange at first. You might find it helpful to talk about the person who has died in conversation. This can be a nice way to remember them and to let people know you have lost someone. Almost everyone will have experienced grief themselves and will understand what you are going through.

Grief can be a long and emotional process. If you find yourself struggling to cope or would like to talk to someone, remember that support is always available.



Useful contacts

Age Scotland helpline: 0800 12 44 222

The Age Scotland helpline provides information, friendship and advice to older people, their relatives and carers.

If you need an interpreter call 0800 12 44 222 and simply state the language you need e.g. Polish or Urdu. Stay on the line for a few minutes and the Age Scotland helpline will do the rest.

Call us for copies of our guides or visit **www.age.scot/information**.

Breathing Space

Confidential support for anyone in Scotland experiencing low mood, depression or anxiety. Support is available via textphone, webchat, in some foreign languages and in British Sign Language.

0800 83 85 87 / www.breathingspace.scot

Cruse Bereavement Care Scotland

Provides information and support for people who are bereaved and those supporting them. Information is available in some foreign languages.

0808 802 6161 / www.crusescotland.org.uk

Drinkaware

An organisation funded by alcohol firms that offers tips on responsible drinking.

www.drinkaware.co.uk

Samaritans

Provides confidential support for people in distress, 24 hours a day.

Tel: **116 123** / Email: **jo@samaritans.org** **www.samaritans.org**

How you can help

Our vision is a Scotland which is the best place in the world to grow older.

All the information we provide is free and impartial. It helps older people access their rights and entitlements and can be life changing.

We are also a lifeline for older people who are feeling lonely and isolated. You can help us to support older people who need us most.

Together, we can make a difference.



Make a donation

No matter how small or large, donations make a massive difference and help us continue our important work.

- Call **03330 15 14 60**
- Visit **age.scot/donate**
- Text **AGESCOTGIVE** to **70085** to donate £5*
- Complete the **donation form** and return by Freepost



Fundraise

Whether it's having a bake sale or running a marathon, there are so many ways to raise vital funds to support our work. To find out more, call **0333 323 2400** or visit **age.scot/fundraise**.



Leave us a gift in your Will

By choosing to leave us a gift in your Will, you can help us to continue being there for older people in the years to come. To find out more, call **0333 323 2400** or visit **age.scot/legacy**.

*Texts cost £5 plus one standard rate message

Please donate today



Complete the form and return by Freepost to RSBS-KEHC-GBBC, Age Scotland, Edinburgh, EH9 1PR

Your details

Title:	Forename:	Surname:
Address:		
	City:	
Postcode:	Date of birth:	

By providing us with your telephone number and email address you are consenting to us contacting you via phone, text and email.

Email:	
Home tel:	Mobile tel:

I WOULD LIKE TO DONATE

£75 ☐ £50 ☐ £25 ☐ Other (£)

I wish to pay by (please tick):

MasterCard ☐ Visa ☐ CAF ☐

CharityCard ☐ Cheque ☐ (payable to Age Scotland)

Signature

Name on Card

Card No.

Expiry date Security code

Date

I prefer not to receive a thank you acknowledgement for this donation ☐

I would like information about leaving a gift in my Will ☐

I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE MY DONATION WORTH 25% MORE

I want Age Scotland** and its partner charities to treat all donations I have made for the four years prior to this year, and all donations I make from the date of this declaration until I notify you otherwise, as Gift Aid donations.

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I am a UK tax payer and understand that if I pay less income tax and/or capital gains tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Yes, I want Age Scotland to claim Gift Aid on my donations** ☐

I do not wish you to claim Gift Aid on my donations ☐

Date

Keeping in touch

We will stay in contact by post unless you ask us not to. We will never sell your data and we promise to keep your details safe and secure. You can change your mind at any time by emailing us on contact@agescotland.org.uk or calling us on 0333 323 2400.

You can read Age Scotland's privacy policy at [age.scot/privacypolicy](https://www.agescotland.org.uk/age.scot/privacypolicy).

**Age Scotland, part of the Age Network, is an independent charity dedicated to improving the later lives of everyone on the ageing journey, within a charitable company limited by guarantee and registered in Scotland. Registration Number: SC153343. Charity Number: SC010100. Registered Office: Causewayside House, 160 Causewayside, Edinburgh, EH9 1PR

Age Scotland is the national charity for older people. We work to improve the lives of everyone over the age of 50 so that they can love later life.

Our vision is a Scotland which is the best place in the world to grow older.

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Let's keep in touch

Contact us:

Head office

0333 323 2400

Age Scotland helpline

0800 12 44 222

Email

info@agescotland.org.uk

Visit our website

www.agescotland.org.uk



Sign up to our newsletter

Our regular newsletters by email contain details of our campaigns, services and how you can support our work.

Sign up today at **age.scot/roundup**



Follow us on social media

Our social media channels are a great way to keep up to date with our work and issues that affect older people.



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