

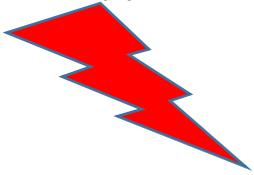
Helping Teenagers through the death of a relative.

For most teenagers it can feel like your life has turned upside down.

Nothing is the same after the death of a grandparent or close relative, but young people are often expected to go back to school and behave as if nothing much has happened.

After a few weeks, others around are getting on with their lives, but you feel your life has been turned upside down, blown apart, changed forever...but people have forgotten to ask how you are and you often don't know if you want the attention anyway.

Just happened?



Just happening?

- ✚ *At first, it may feel like a storm.*
- ✚ *You may feel overwhelmingly sad.*
- ✚ *Or, want to fall apart. Or, feel nothing at all.*
- ✚ *These emotions are normal and part of the trauma.*
- ✚ *Welcome to Planet Grief.*
- ✚ *This is when you and your family may benefit from "First Aid".*

HOME - may be different too now

You may not want to go out or can't wait to leave. Nowhere may feel safe.



You may be picked on, bullied, have lost friends or different after the death. Everything's changed. If your world has been blown apart, you may be left climbing out of the rubble. It still can be a very frightening place to be especially if you feel alone, ill-equipped and confused... Like living on another planet for a while. You can't get back to where you were, so we have to find a new place to be the new person we are becoming. You may find it hard to

- a. *get help,*
- b. *ask for help,*
- c. *admit you need help.*

It's a BIG ISSUE. Admitting to yourself that this has had a body blow of an impact on you, is hard. It's confusing and bewildering, how can it be?



School

School can be a difficult place if people around don't give you some leeway and lots of understanding. The death needs to be acknowledged by all those around you - teachers, friends and other staff.

You are different now and need time to become that new person.

It's very easy to find escape routes: pretend nothings' happened, drink, drugs, self-harm, working hard, not working hard.

Feeling different

Wish we had a sign that explained everything without having to explain, especially on those bad days.



Having Fun

Are you FEELING as if the fun has gone out of your life?

Home is full of sadness and memories.

It is easier to be out of home, yet the family is one thing you need the most at the moment. The family needs to learn how to be together.....in different ways without the dead person... and without tears and anger.

Nights in the dark 4.00am ...can't sleep

Many young people can't sleep when they go to bed at night. Night-time can be the only time that you can feel openly sad, alone in your bed.

Facebook, gaming and texts are so tempting especially in the lonely dark hours. If sleep is too difficult because of traumatic thoughts or nightmares, feeling good in the morning is a challenge.



Many teens long for the good night's sleep they had before the person died; now all they see are skeletons, monsters and burglars.

Sleeping Tips

-  Switch off all phones and computers.
-  Relax before you go to bed and avoid fizzy drinks etc.
-  Try not to go to bed with your worries and burdens, share them.

Drugs and alcohol

What can an adult say to a teen that will impact?

Using escape stuff will not make the pain go away: It will only mask the pain and make it worse in the long run.

Physically you need your strength to deal with all the feelings that come with grieving.

Everyone does grief differently

Emotions/Reactions



Grieving over someone special dying is not all about crying, although it usually helps. Some think crying is a weakness or stupid.

It is different for everyone, but there's also lots of times where you have things in common and you don't have to be isolated or alone.

Sometimes it's hard to try and control your reactions. Some people have been known to laugh when they hear a loved one is dead, it doesn't mean they find it funny, it's just the shock and confusion mixing up the emotions inside them.



Fear (and worry) After someone close dies, young people usually have loads of worries, especially about death, dying and the future. Death's an unwelcome visitor in your house and grief's like darkness getting into every gap. Remember, you control the fear, it doesn't control you.

Relationships

Trusting the right people is difficult now. You may look to the wrong person for the love you lost. Many teens now find close relationships more difficult to manage. If your relative was the one who gave you trusted advice or listened to your ideas and now they are gone, you distrust your own feelings. You knew how to think after talking with them. How will you know what you think now?



Family Holidays/Events

Teens often say their best memories are of family holidays that will never be the same. Some prefer not to be with their family because the reminders are too painful. Events become non-events or worse - sad days. Try and make these remembering days instead and still have fun in honour of your dead relative.

Growing up too quickly

What's the point?

What's the meaning of life?

Life just doesn't seem much fun anymore.

Often, there's a lot of outside pressure without any real understanding of how hard things are inside me and at home.



"I don't know, I was confused. I didn't really know what to do like. I was just like I wasn't too sure about anything back then"

Andrew

The 'gone forever and not coming back' is pretty hard to cope with. Lots of young people say they have regrets that they argued or didn't love their relative enough. They wanted to do things over, but it was too late.

I was confused like everything in my head felt confused... I didn't know where I was because I was so tired"

Vicky

Inside Hurts

It may feel easier to pretend, hide the hurts and keep it all inside. Adults don't know how to help with the pain and often you don't know either. You may be playing the "mutual pretence" game of "I'm alright, so not to upset those around you."

People say things like they understand but they don't.

Damage Limitation

Piecing back together your life after the bad news can take a long time. Words to explain are hard to find and the fear and sadness is just hidden away.

Sharing can help

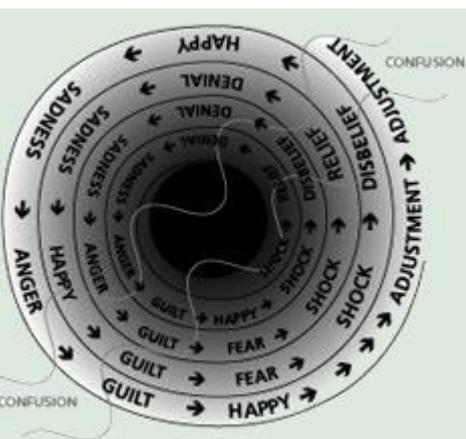
Bereaved young people need to be able to tell others what it's like. This can help you understand what's going on in your head (you are not going mad).

But how? Get info from us www.griefcounter.org.uk/ or others who have been through it. And, help to explain to others why things are so different now and not all doom and gloom. Talking is good, remembering is good.

It's hard to face the fear and pain of loss, especially when you can be out there having fun. This can mean you end up lost, angry and lonely. Finding some space to grieve will help. It should help you to put some of the puzzle pieces back together.

"I remember being really angry with everyone because I didn't understand it at the time... I wanted to punch something, but I knew this wasn't right. I just didn't know which way to turn" Vicky

The Spiral of Grief



Feelings come and go and come back and go and go and go and come back, like a spiral.

Feelings should get less intense and you can adjust in time, but you can always come back to them if you need to. Just don't get stuck. Anytime, anyplace and often when you least expect it. The trick is to manage your feelings; they don't control you. There are big empty spaces to fill. Somehow or other, you need a new space for the dead person.

Find somewhere to "put" the memories so you can be comfortable thinking about them. Make a memory box, write about them, facebook timelines, remembrance times or just a photo in a book to glance at when you need to remember them.

Death makes us understand that the worst has happened so we now know we can survive anything. This experience will have made us more understanding of other's pain and maybe more able to help others. Maybe, we know now we only have one life, it's not a rehearsal - so we have to go out and LIVE life, make it meaningful and enjoy.



Death makes you realise who and what is important in life.

Remember

- + Don't be afraid to cry.*
- + Be around people who love you*
- + There is no set time to stop grieving.*
- + Don't hide your feelings for fear of upsetting others.*
- + Ask for a hug.*
- + Write down your thoughts.*
- + Don't feel guilty for getting on with your life.*



- *Text to SPUNOUT 086 1800280 to chat anonymously with a trained volunteer.*
- *Call the Samaritans. 116123*
- *Teenline Tel: 1800 83 36 34 www.teenline.ie*
- *Teen Counselling: Tel: 01 557 4705 Email: teencounselling@crosscare.ie, www.teencounselling.ie*
- *Barnardos Childhood Bereavement Service (01) 473 2110 open Monday to Thursday, 10am-12pm*
- *Grief Encounters Pod casts*

Adapted from Teenager's Guide to getting on with life after death. www.griefencounter.org.uk