

CBCS offers bereavement support, training and education throughout Scotland.

Through a network of trained volunteers, CBCS helps bereaved people to understand their grief and to undertake the journey of recovery.

CBCS has a range of other leaflets and resources which you might find helpful.

Contact CBCS by phone or e-mail, or check out the website.

CBCS receives some grant aid from the Scottish Executive, but relies heavily on voluntary contributions to maintain its Service. If you would like to support the work of CBCS, please contact the address on the back of this leaflet.



Bridging the Gap

Talking to bereaved people - *a rough guide*

When faced with a bereaved relative, friend or colleague, many of us are not sure what to say or do as a result of our unease, we often say or do nothing. In this leaflet, we try to "bridge the gap" and show how a few simple words or actions might make all the difference .

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Around 60,000 people die in Scotland each year. On the assumption that each death leaves around 4 people who are closely related and therefore deeply bereaved, there are almost 250,000 bereaved people - spouses and partners, sons and daughters, mothers and fathers - in Scotland in any year.

***Grief is part of everyday life
- it is important to understand it!***

Close family and friends are really important - they have shared in the story of the person who has died. Other people are also important - because bereaved people may want to talk, to share their grief, and most of all they need someone to listen.

***Recognise the pain that bereaved people carry,
and allow them to share it!***

There are many different "symptoms" of grief - and often bereaved people feel that nobody else has ever felt the way they do. If grief is natural then all these feelings are normal, they are part of the way we react to bad news and part of the way we start to recover.

Reassure people that what they are feeling is normal!

SMITH - peacefully, on 29 June,
after a short illness, Jim, loved
husband of Jean father of Peter,
Ann, May and Margaret.

The death of Jim Smith did not make the headlines. His death was not news. The short lines in the death notices were read by a few, and ignored by most. But for his wife his children and grandchildren, his death was the most shattering event of their lives so far.

Their close friends attended the funeral and they promised to call afterwards. Others sent cards or flowers, and a few wrote letters, saying how sorry they were. For a few weeks people showed concern for his wife, but soon they were caught up again in their own lives. The promised visits never happened, nor did the invitations for coffee.

Some unexpected people stopped her in the street and asked how she was - but the people she expected to speak seemed not to see her, or turned away in embarrassment.

When she returned to work, colleagues fell silent, or they chattered rapidly about the weather or their holidays. Her children seemed to be coping and tried to change the subject when she started to speak about Jim.

After just a few weeks, it seemed to Jim's wife that she must be going mad, because she still felt sad, and lonely, and she still wanted to talk about him. She wasn't sleeping very well, she missed his cold feet! And she was losing weight too, but then she didn't see the point of cooking for one....

The loneliness of grief is something very real. Once all the business that surrounds a death - the funeral and the multitude of things that have to be done - have been dealt with, the bereaved person begins to realise just how lonely life can be.

That loneliness is both social - the feeling of being on their own - and emotional - the deep aching void inside which feels almost as though a part of them selves has died.

And all too often the loneliness sets in just about the time that other people are beginning to forget.

***Offer bereaved people your time,
your companionship, your listening!***

Many people feel that getting back to work will be helpful and indeed it often is. Bereaved people do not grieve all the time - and it can be helpful, when, when they are ready, to assist them to reclaim some of the "normal" dimensions of their life.

For others, employment policies may mean that compassionate leave is limited and a return to work is a necessity. It can help to take that step gently - maybe visiting work first to break the ice or starting with part-time hours.

***Don't avoid bereaved work colleagues - tell them you
are sorry - allow them to talk about their loss!***