

Allow yourself to cry, to laugh and to be angry - you have lost someone you feel deeply about and it hurts.

Allow yourself to experience the pain so that you may work through it.

## How We Can Help

If, as a result of reading this leaflet, you feel it would be helpful to talk with someone about your feelings and experiences, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us.

Ardgowan Hospice has a Counselling Service offering specialised bereavement counselling and support to help with the feelings and problems that are so often the result of bereavement. It is never a mistake, nor is it an indication of emotional imbalance, to seek professional help at any point in bereavement.

Grief is not something that we can go round. Rather we have to go through it. It is the aim of the Hospice Bereavement Service to assist in this difficult task.

To talk with someone, please telephone or contact:

### **Bereavement & Counselling Services Co-ordinator**

Ardgowan Hospice  
12 Nelson Street  
Greenock PA15 1TS  
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## **Bereavement Care**

## **Information for Relatives and Friends**

## Bereavement

At some time in our lives, most of us will be faced with the death of someone we care deeply about.

Although each of us reacts to loss in different ways, we have tried to describe within this leaflet some of the feelings and experiences most frequently felt by bereaved people.

If you should recognise any of these feelings in yourself, we hope you will take comfort from knowing that others share them. Mourning is the process of adapting to loss.

We must grieve for those who have died so that we can go on living.

## Accepting the Reality of Loss

At first you may feel numb, strangely calm and detached or confused and unable to take in what has happened. It may seem impossible to believe that someone has died.

It is quite common to think you can hear or see the dead person. You may look for them in a crowd, listen for them when the phone rings, or see them in a favourite chair—even though you may know they will not be there.

At times you may have the feeling that you are searching for something but are never able to find it.

## Disorganisation, Emptiness, Despair

This period may be the longest part of grieving. You may feel that you no longer have a reason for living, that nothing interests you. You may even feel that you are “going mad”.

Perhaps you will feel guilty for the things you did/did not do. Many bereaved people find themselves feeling angry—with God, family, friends, hospital and medical staff, themselves or with the one who has died. It is not unusual to have difficulty in remembering simple things or doing your normal tasks.

Feelings of anxiety, helplessness, fear and tremendous loneliness are felt by many people during this stage. You may very well think that you will never feel better again.

## Wanting to Escape

You may feel that you could cope better if you moved house and disposed of all the things that are reminders of the dead person. Bereavement is painful.

It is much better to make important decisions, like moving house, when you are able to think more clearly and objectively. Try to avoid making decisions you might regret until you feel better.

## Health

It is quite normal to feel tired and unable to sleep, eat or concentrate properly. You may even begin to have pains you normally do not experience. For the most part these are things that happen to many bereaved people but if they persist you should consult your doctor.

## Beginning to Live Again

In time you will become aware that you are beginning to have good hours and days. You will find that you can listen to that “special” piece of music or remember something that you once shared with the one who has died, without feeling so sad. Gradually you will begin to take up new interests and renew your old ones. At this time you may sometimes feel you are being disloyal to the person who had died but you should try to remember that, while the past will always be with you, there is a present and a future that you can enjoy.

## Helping Yourself

Grief is individual and each of us reacts to it differently. No one can completely understand what another person’s grief is like but it is an experience most of us go through and there are people willing to listen and understand as much as they can. If you have feelings of guilt, panic, anger, fear or self-pity, do not try to hide them. They are part of your grief. Try to share them with an understanding listener.

If friends seem to be avoiding you, it is possible they are embarrassed because they feel helpless to say or do the “right” things. They too may be grieving.

Allow yourself to express your feelings - good and not so good - with someone you trust.