

GRIEF & BEREAVEMENT: A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS AND STAFF AT CANTERBURY CHRIST CHURCH UNIVERSITY IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

As a member of our University community what happens to you matters to us, and never more so than during this time of the Covid-19 pandemic. If you find yourself experiencing bereavement, then this brief guide is for you. It explains about the nature of grief and where to find support.

THE EXPERIENCE OF BEREAVEMENT

Death involves loss and bereavement. When someone close to us dies we feel great grief and sorrow. To be bereaved can be difficult and stressful, but it is something nearly everybody goes through at some point in their lives.

This sense of loss may contain a range of emotions, such as sadness, anger, guilt, frustration and anxiety. Everyone experiences grief differently and there is no 'normal' or 'right' way to grieve. How we react will be influenced by many different things, including our age and personality, our cultural background and religious beliefs, our previous experiences of bereavement, our circumstances and how we cope with loss.

Whatever your experience of bereavement, whether you are directly affected or because you are caring for a bereaved person, this guide is intended to help you negotiate the next steps in your journey.

ARE YOU CARING FOR SOMEONE WHO IS BEREAVED?

If you are caring for someone who has been bereaved it is important to know how to help them as best you can, and how to look after your own wellbeing too.

Whether you are a family member, friend, neighbour, charity volunteer or a professional, you are undertaking an important role. The good news is research tells us that straightforward kindness and loving behaviours at this time can be a big help to bereaved people. You do not need to be a professional or have significant training or experience to give help and support. However, caring for someone who is bereaved is likely to bring challenges. This guide is intended to help you to meet those challenges.

COVID-19 AND BEREAVEMENT

The coronavirus (covid-19) global pandemic has and will continue to result in the substantial loss of life across many countries including the UK. It is anticipated that the Canterbury Christ Church University community will also experience loss of life which brings the support, advice and guidance available for bereaved people and those caring for them into sharp focus.

A bereavement from covid-19 is likely to be a very challenging kind of bereavement for most people and, because it is challenging, it is really important that people bereaved by covid-19 are cared for. We know, from research, that early support and care for bereaved people can mean that it is easier, over time, to make a recovery with good mental health. By 'recovery' the aim is to enable the bereaved person to make the journey from grieving to remembering.

A death from covid-19 may mean:

- little time to prepare for a loved one's death following a period of illness due to covid-19;
- no time spent with a loved one before they died due to the risk of infection and social distancing rules;
- an inability to say goodbye after death due to restrictions around attending funerals, public gatherings and travel;
- isolation issues, as people may be grieving while separated from family and friends who may also be grieving but in other locations;
- practical challenges, for example if the person bereaved was previously receiving care from someone who has died and/or they have responsibilities to care for others or have ongoing work or family responsibilities;
- issues around coping with a shocking bereavement at a time when the bereaved person, or others in their circle of family and friends, may also be ill with covid-19.

This guide has been written in response to this context.

It is intended to signpost bereaved people and those caring for bereaved people to appropriate support and help which is free and easily accessible.

ADVICE FOR COVID-19 RELATED BEREAVEMENT

The charity [Sudden](#) has produced covid-19 specific bereavement advice which can be accessed here :

- [Covid-19 bereavement - advice for you](#)
- [Covid-19 bereavement - advice if you caring for someone bereaved](#)

WE ARE HERE TO HELP AND SUPPORT YOU

Canterbury Christ Church University is committed to providing support, advice and guidance to staff and students who are experiencing bereavement and loss.

Experiencing bereavement is often confusing and disorientating and you may experience a mixture of emotions that can be overwhelming. We may not in reality have a good sense of where to begin. If this is the case, you should contact one of the following for a preliminary conversation:

- The Chaplaincy Team, for both our staff and student community, whatever faith or no faith;
- The Mental wellbeing Team, for our student community, or
- The Employee Support Programme, for staff, or
- A National helpline.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SPEAK TO SOMEONE AT THE UNIVERSITY?

STUDENTS CAN ACCESS ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FROM THE STUDENT SUPPORT MENTAL WELLBEING TEAM

The Mental Wellbeing Team can provide listening and compassionate support to students and signpost to counselling and mental health support, services and charities outside the University, and to online resources.

We have a team of counsellors all skilled in bereavement support.

Email: mentalwellbeing@canterbury.ac.uk

Telephone: 01227 923056

Are you worried about your studies?

Canterbury Christ Church University has published a special [Coronavirus webpage](#) intended to keep everyone updated on the evolving situation and the University's response based on the latest available information and guidance from the UK Government. The webpage contains the latest guidance and support for students by way of a series of FAQs relating to teaching and learning.

You can also contact your Personal Academic Tutor or Programme Team if you have been affected by bereavement and need support in your studies.

STAFF CAN ACCESS ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FROM CIC- EMPLOYEE SUPPORT

Staff can also access the University's Employee Support Programme provided by CIC

CIC offers an easily accessible 24/7 helpline. To speak to a consultant/counsellor, send them an email initially and they will be able to help and support you.

Email: assist@cic-eap.co.uk.

CIC also provide online services, with access to a range of resources, including:

- Counselling
- Legal and debt advice
- Family care
- Every day matters
- Health and Wellbeing
- Managers advice line

Access to counselling for staff will be made directly through CIC. Staff will need to login in order to do this. This can be done via [StaffNet](#).

Please also note our [Compassionate Leave policy for staff](#).

CONTACTS FOR STUDENTS AND STAFF

Jeremy, David and Lynne are experienced listeners with both personal and professional experience in the areas of bereavement and loss, as well as funeral ministry and care for the sick and dying.

They are available to speak to students and staff whatever your faith is, or if you have no faith.

You can make contact as follows:

- **Jeremy:** 07730672273 or jeremy.law@canterbury.ac.uk
- **David:** 07841615904 or david.stroud@canterbury.ac.uk
- **Lynne:** 07778567097 or l.martin@greenwich.ac.uk

We can also put you in touch with a University faith advisor if you need faith-specific advice. We have faith advisors from the Buddhist, Hindu, Humanist, Islamic and Pagan communities.

ARE YOU STRUGGLING AND NEED URGENT HELP?

If you're in distress and need support, you can ring Samaritans for free at any time of the day or night. Freephone (UK and Republic of Ireland): 116 123 (24 hours) or email: jo@samaritans.org

DO YOU WANT TO TRY A HELPLINE?

There are various national helplines who will be able to give free and quick advice and support to you:

- [CRUISE Bereavement Support](#) – free helpline: 0808 808 1677 offering free advice, information and support to adults, young people and children who are struggling to cope with grief. The helpline is open Monday-Friday 9.30-5pm (excluding bank holidays), with extended hours on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings, when it is open until 8pm.
- [Hope Again](#) - free helpline: 0808 808 1677 (Mon-Fri 9:30-5pm). Hope Again is Cruse Bereavement Care's website for young people with information, vlogs, podcasts, videos and sharing personal stories.
- [The Bereavement Trust](#) - free helpline: 0800 435 455 (6pm to 10pm every day) offering support and practical advice about bereavement.
- [Survivors of Bereavement By Suicide](#) – free helpline: 0300 111 5065 (9am to 9pm every day).
- [Sands](#) – free helpline: 0808 164 3332 (9.30am to 5.30pm Mon-Fri and 9.30am to 9.30pm Tues and Thurs evenings) for anyone affected by stillbirth or neonatal death.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO ACCESS SOME ONLINE SUPPORT?

[Big White Wall](#) is an anonymous online resource available to students and staff for free as a member of Canterbury Christ Church University.

OTHER DIGITAL RESOURCES

- [NHS Choices](#) 'Grief after bereavement or loss' has information about how to cope and mental health and wellbeing.
- [What's Your Grief?](#) offers an online supportive community, resources and discussion about grief.
- [The Good Grief Trust](#) offers support and resources by others who have been bereaved.
- [The LOSS Foundation](#) has a short video describing the stages of grief – [Phases of Grief](#)

APPS

[Child Bereavement UK](#) offer an app for 11-25-year-olds who have been bereaved of someone important to them. It can also be used by friends, teachers, parents, and professionals who would like to know how to support bereaved young people. You can find out more [here](#).

[Calm](#) offer an app to help you manage your mood in the grief process with meditation. You can find out more [here](#).

WOULD YOU LIKE ACCESS TO SOME BEREAVEMENT COUNSELLING?

Cruse Bereavement Care is the leading national charity providing bereavement support services in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. They offer support, advice and information to children, young people and adults when someone dies and work to enhance society's care of bereaved people.

Cruse offers face-to-face, telephone, email and website support. They have a national helpline, local services, a [website and freephone helpline](#) specifically for children and young people. Their services are provided by trained volunteers and are confidential and free.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO DO SOME 'OFF-LINE' READING ABOUT BEREAVEMENT AND LOSS?

On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and David Kessler (2005)

[The Compassionate Friends](#) have also compiled a suggested reading list with books categorised for ease of reference. See the list [here](#).

A NOTE OF ENCOURAGEMENT FOR YOU

"That's really what grief has taught me. That I can survive. I used to be afraid that if I experienced grief it would overcome me and I wouldn't be able to survive the flood of it, that if I actually felt it I wouldn't be able to get back up. It's taught me that I can feel it and it won't swallow me whole. But we come from a culture where we think people have to be strong. I'm a big believer in being vulnerable, open to grief. That is strength. You can't know joy unless you know profound sadness. They don't exist without each other."

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Canterbury Christ Church would like to acknowledge the University of Plymouth for developing this approach and resource.