

Helping **You** to Cope with Grief and Loss

DOs AND DON'Ts

DO share feelings. **DON'T** bottle them up.

DO take every opportunity to go over the experience, both within yourself and with others. **DON'T** avoid talking about what happened.

DO expect the memories to be with you for a long time, though their strength and scariness will fade.

DO let your family, friends or other adults know what help you need.

Support Agencies which can offer help:

- Lincolnshire Centre for Grief and Loss (www.lcgl.org.uk)
- Cruse (www.cruse.org.uk)
- Winstons Wish (www.winstoneswish.org.uk)
- Samaritans (www.samaritans.org)

Information about websites can also be found in the document 'Helpful Websites' produced by the Educational Psychology Team and available on the Lincolnshire County Council website (www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/parents/familysupport/the_educational_psychology_service)

For further information contact the Educational Psychology Team on:

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Your experience will have been a very personal one, though shared with many other pupils, staff and parents. This leaflet will explain some common reactions and offer suggestions to help you.

What Happened?

If a traumatic event and/or significant loss has occurred it is likely to have been highly stressful. At these times it is important to find out exactly what has happened. Rumours spread easily and can make the situation worse. Don't be afraid to ask questions so you understand exactly what has occurred.

Feelings and Emotions You May Experience

Fear

- Of 'breaking down' or 'losing control'.
- Of a similar event happening again.
- Of the suddenness and unpredictability of it all.
- Feeling jittery or on edge.

Guilt

- Feeling as if you're not coping as well as others.
- For feeling somehow responsible (even when others tell you that you are not).
- For being unable to do anything to help.

Shame

- For having been exposed as helpless, 'emotional' and needing others.
- For not having reacted as you would have wished, or thought you 'ought' to have done.

Anger

- At the injustice and senselessness of it all.
- Why him/her?
- Wanting to make someone responsible for what has happened.

Feeling Nothing Much at All

- Feeling numb, as if anaesthetised.
- Feeling disengaged.
- Feeling overwhelmed in waves.

Confused

- Having mixed feelings about wanting to forget it/remember it.

Let Down

- Feeling that others do not understand what you have been through.
- Wanting an explanation to make sense of what has happened.

Excluded

- If other people are busy organising the practicalities.
- For not 'being there' at the time it happened.

Memories and Intrusive Thoughts

- Of the shock of feelings at the time and soon afterwards.
- Of earlier events or losses of people close to you.
- Of seeing unpleasantness.

Physical and Behavioural Reactions

These may occur hours, days or even weeks after the event; this is quite usual. Do share them. Let others know about them. Reactions could include:

Physical

- Tiredness.
- Sleeplessness.
- Headaches.
- Bowel/bladder problems.
- Loss or increase of appetite.

Behavioural

- Intrusive thoughts or ideas.
- Bad dreams.
- Loss of concentration and forgetfulness.
- Easily upset/irritable.
- Insecure feelings.
- Need for reassurance.

Avoidance of people, events and places that remind you of the loss can be protective and helpful for a while, but can be counter-productive or unhelpful later on. Chance reminders can trigger memories which can feel overwhelming.

What May Help?

At first you may feel numb. The event may feel unreal/like a dream. Others may wrongly think this means you don't care, as everyone will be experiencing their own reactions to the situation and may handle things in a different way.

Keeping active

- Helping others may give you some relief.
- Do try to keep to your usual routine.
- You may want to return to the scene of the event, attend the funeral or memorial service.
- There are many ways in which you can treasure memories including creating a memory box with precious things or a memory book of photographs. You might want to put something in writing about a person/event.

Going Over the Event

- Over time you may find yourself thinking about and processing the event. You may find it helpful to talk, write or draw about it.

Support

- You may find it comforting to receive physical and emotional support from others such as friends and family. Do not reject it. Sharing with others who have had similar experiences can help.
- You may find it helpful to talk to someone uninvolved in the event, or to search for information on supportive websites.

Privacy

- In order to deal with feelings, you may find it necessary at times to be alone, or just with family and close friends.