

# Grieve with support

Two things in life will always be with us – death and taxes. Taxes are annoying but the death of a loved one can devastate us.

Though mentally we all know that death is a natural part of the life cycle, that doesn't help much when we are suddenly faced with the death of someone close to us. We can't escape a feeling of devastation.

But it's worth remembering that avoiding emotional pain means not to love at all.

Instead of avoiding dealing with death, we need to engage with it. If we don't, we are denying the importance of a love that has been a huge part of our lives.

Experiencing grief is painful, because we have had a relationship taken from us that was incredibly important. Even through this terrible pain, it can help to remember that the person who has physically gone is still present in the memories we have, and those memories need to be shared and valued.

Eventually grief changes from absolute loss and separation to a recognition they are still with you in spirit.

Don't make the mistake of expecting that a grieving person will go through nicely boxed, linear phases of grief, and then in a month or two they will "get over it".

The stages of grief are circular. Disbelief, denial, anger and devastation can all be experienced in a day, or even an hour. And even years later, echoes of these feelings can suddenly catch you unawares.

The key to coping with loss is not to battle through it alone.

We all need somebody to walk beside us in our grief, and that might be a family member, a friend or a professional grief counsellor. It doesn't matter where the help comes from, as long as it happens.

If you try to cope with grief alone, it can be a very destructive experience. Some people find that a mix of support from family, friends and professional counsellors or the GP is the way to go.

It's vital for friends not to drop away after the initial grieving period. Six months later support may still be needed.

So a phone call or a card to say you are thinking of them is a great idea.

Going on with life means incorporating the person who has died, not forgetting them. That's the only way to put our lives back together and face the future.

## Survival tips

- **Don't try to avoid grief – the loss of loving will hurt, but it's a journey you must take**
- **Never try to face grief alone. Get support from family, friends, and perhaps professional counsellors**
- **The best gift you can give a grieving friend is time spent listening and sharing.**