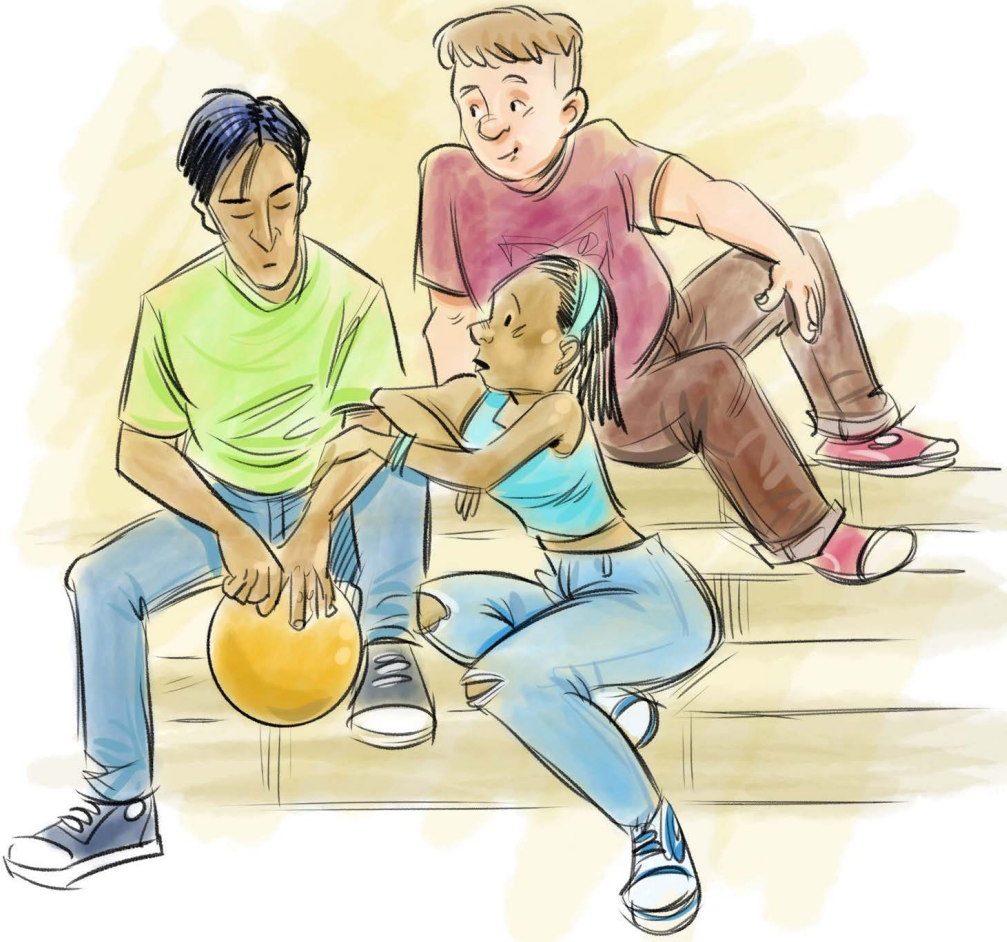
Child Bereavement UK
REBUILDING LIVES TOGETHER

# When someone special dies



## For young people

# When someone special has died

This leaflet has been given to you because someone important in your life has died.

At the moment, there's probably a lot for you to take in. The information in this leaflet is designed to help you understand your feelings and to take care of yourself.

Try to remember that you're not alone - family and friends are there to support you and you can always make contact with other bereaved young people via charity websites and support groups such as those run by Child Bereavement UK.

When we receive sad and shocking news, it can be hard to take in. You may experience all the emotions listed here, or at first you may feel nothing at all. It's important to remember that you may experience lots of new emotions - this is a natural part of grief.

When someone dies, it is very common to start wondering about life, what it means to you, who you are and what you'd like to be. If you are worried about your thoughts or feel unsafe, tell someone.

anxious
scared
worried
helpless
tired
lonely
confused
OK
numb
angry
sad
calm

"Grief affects us all in different ways."

Charlie, 15

# Going back to school or college

You may find going back to school or college quite a hard thing to do. Part of you may want to get back to your usual daily routine and see friends again, but another part of you may just want to hide away.

You might find it helpful to think about how you would like to manage going back. Would you like your teacher to tell the class before you return? Maybe you'd prefer to speak to people individually?

Maybe you wish that you didn't have to tell anyone at all. However, if others don't know what you have to manage, they won't have the chance to offer you their care and support.

At first, you might be able to go back on a part-time basis to give you a chance to settle in. Ask your teacher or head of year what options are available to you.

Talk to your teacher or ask a family member to so that you know what will happen when you return.

"There are always people to reach out to and nobody will judge you. It is easier to get through something when you can talk it through with someone."

Alex, 21

## The funeral

The thought of going to the funeral might feel overwhelming, especially if you haven't been to one before.

In some cultures, young people are not allowed to attend funerals. If you are allowed to go to the funeral, it might help to talk to friends and relatives about what happens at a funeral to help you decide whether you'd like to attend and so that you feel more prepared.

If you would like to, it might be possible to put a letter, a picture, or something else special to you in the coffin before the funeral - whatever feels right for you.

The funeral can be helpful in giving you a chance to say goodbye to the person who has died.

If you decide not to go, perhaps you can think of other ways of remembering the person, like making a memory box, writing about them or just going on a walk somewhere that was important to them or reminds you of them.

## Changes

For many of us, change can be a worry. It might help to sit down with a parent or carer or someone else you trust and talk about things that might change now, and things that will stay the same. This can help you to feel more secure at a time when life can seem unpredictable.

"While your grief will never go away, it does get easier and you will be OK, so don't give up."

Olivia, aged 14

## What helps?

As we are all different, what helps one person may not help another. But here are some things that bereaved young people have told us helped them:

Exercise is a really good stress- reliever and it makes me feel really good.

It's OK to laugh and have fun.

Sharing your feelings with a group of people who have been through the same thing can make you feel that you're not alone.

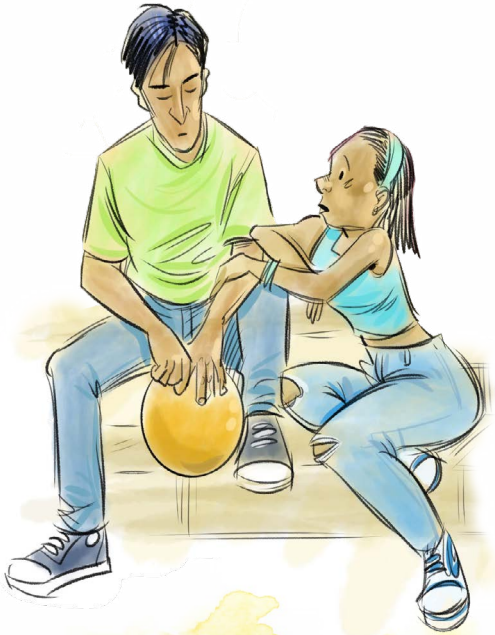
Don't keep it all in, you're not alone, find someone you trust to say everything to.

Making a memory jar helped me a lot as it reassured me that there are still a lot of memories there.

Sport takes your mind off things and it's a great distraction at a low moment to go outside and have a kick about.

## Talking

Try talking with friends or family about how you are feeling. You could each share your memories of the person who has died. You might smile or laugh at happy memories or you might cry together - it's OK to show others how you're feeling. If you would rather talk to someone who is not so close, you might like to try talking to a bereavement support practitioner and maybe joining a group where you can meet other young people who are in a similar situation to you. You can call Child Bereavement UK's Helpline or Live Chat to find out more.



## Reading

There are lots of books available that offer guidance and support to grieving young people. Have a look at the reading list on our website:

**childbereavementuk.org**

"I was really alone, I didn't want to speak to anyone but now I can talk about what happened without getting upset."

Seamus, 15

## Looking after yourself

Grief can be exhausting and make it difficult to cope with things in your life like school or college, your social life or work. It's really important to look after yourself so that you have the strength to do the things that are important to you.

Things that can help include making sure you eat well, if you can, as this will give you energy to cope with your grief. Try and eat a varied diet which includes different types of foods such as fruit and vegetables, proteins and carbohydrates. It can also help to get a little exercise each day - just going around the block and getting outside for some fresh air can help you relax and feel less stressed. Sleep can also help, but some bereaved young people say they find it hard to sleep. Ways to improve your sleep include having a regular bedtime, avoiding caffeine (which is in coffee, tea, chocolate and some energy drinks) and reducing screentime before you go to bed.

## Connecting with others

Finding out how other young people felt when they were bereaved, and sharing your experiences, can help you to feel less alone.

Take each day a step at a time, do what feels right for you, and don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it.

"Sometimes all I need is a hug, but other times just to be left alone."

Charlie, 15

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## For further support and guidance call our Helpline or visit our website

**0800 02 888 40**

**childbereavementuk.org**

This leaflet was prepared with the help of bereaved families.
Our thanks to Charlie and Imogen Jones.
Illustrations by Gary Andrews (@garyscribbler).

Registered Charity: 1040419 / SCO42910