



St Luke's
Services

Information on Grief, Loss and Change

Working in
partnership
with the



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Introduction

This leaflet is designed in two sections. The first section gives you a brief guide for carers who are looking after someone in their last days of life, and the second section gives you a guide on the emotional issues raised by illness and bereavement.

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Section One

Palliative care is about maximizing quality of life for those who have a terminal illness. It addresses people's physical, emotional and spiritual needs.

“You matter because you are you. You matter to the last moment of your life and we will do all we can to help you not only to die peacefully, but also to live until you die.”

Cecily Saunders

The last few days for the patient - what may happen

- loss of appetite and difficulty in swallowing
- being bed bound
- increasing drowsiness or sleepiness
- a reduced need to pass urine
- occasional agitation
- changing breathing pattern with occasional noisy breathing (this can be more distressing for the carer than the patient)

Professional support

- G.P. Tel
- Community Nurses Tel
- St Luke's Community Specialist Palliative Care Team Tel
- St Luke's Hospice Tel
- St Luke's Hospital Specialist Palliative Care Team Tel

Death occurs when

Breathing has stopped and no pulse can be felt.

This can still come as a shock even though death is expected.

What to do when death occurs

In the Hospice/Hospital:

- If you are not present, you will be contacted
- The hospice staff will contact a funeral director of your choice
- The GP surgery, Hospice or Derriford Bereavement Office will give you a time to collect the medical certificate. This will usually be the next working day.
- The **Medical Certificate** shows the cause of death (this is free of charge and will be in a sealed envelope addressed to the registrar).
- Attached is a **formal** notice - "**Duties of Informant**" that states that the doctor has signed the Medical Certificate and tells you how to get the death registered.
- You will then need to book an appointment with the registry office in the area where the death occurred. (For Plymouth Tel:01752 268331 Mon-Fri; 9.30-4.30pm)
- Please remember if the patient is for cremation two doctors need to sign the certificate.

At Home:

- Phone the G.P. who will visit and certify the death
- Contact a funeral director who will then guide you through all the arrangements

Things to take with you

- Medical death certificate
- Any forms given to you if the death has been referred to the coroner
- Birth certificate and Medical card if possible
- National Insurance Number
- Cash or a cheque book to purchase additional copies of the death certificate if required

Religious and Spiritual Issues

Your local faith minister / representative is available to give spiritual advice to your family and close friends following a death. Also assistance can be given with the preparation of a funeral and conducting a service. If you have no religious beliefs but would like to talk over some form of service that you think would be appropriate, you can get in touch with St Luke's Hospice Chaplaincy team.

Tel: 01752 401172

Refer to St Luke's Hospice leaflet
"Planning a Funeral"

Derriford Hospital Chaplaincy contacts

Pastoral and Spiritual Care Team Tel: 01752 245255

How you may feel at this time

- numb
- shocked
- exhausted
- confused
- questioning
- angry

All of these feelings are normal, but if you need help or support please use the contact list at the back of this information book to enable you to choose who to contact.



Section Two

About Grieving

Grief is a normal process, it takes time to adjust and you may not be able to function in the same way as before.

You may notice some, none or many of these things happening to you:

- Absent mindedness / or lack of concentration
- Disturbed sleep
- Altered appetite
- Going over events leading up to the death
- A sense of presence of the person who has died
- Remembering past events
- Increased anxiety
- Avoiding going out or avoiding staying in

Listen to yourself and accept how you are feeling. If you are worried or anxious about how you are coping, for example:-

- If you have no-one to talk to, but feel you need to
- If you feel you cannot handle intense feelings or body sensations
- If you feel that your emotions are not falling into place over a period of time and you feel chronic tension, confusion, emptiness or exhaustion
- If, for a long period, you have to keep active in order to avoid painful feelings
- If you continue to have nightmares and poor sleep
- If your relationships seem to be suffering badly, or sexual problems develop
- If you have accidents
- If you notice you continue to smoke, drink or take drugs in excess since the event

Everyone experiences grief differently, there is no 'right' way to grieve we are all individuals hence we will react in different ways. Some describe this time of loss and change as “being on an emotional roller coaster ride”. Help is available if you are worried.

Who might help?

- **St Luke's Bereavement Service:** We are able to offer support from Bereavement Volunteers and Social Workers that work for St Luke's Services. We will normally call the bereaved family approximately six weeks after the death to see if they would like any further support. Please call (01752) 401172 if you need any advice or support and we will be happy to assist you. This service is available from Monday - Friday 9am - 5pm.
- **Friends and Family:** You may worry about burdening others who are also grieving, but often it just takes one person to be brave enough to talk about how they are feeling to enable everyone to share their own thoughts and feelings.
- **The Hospice Team:** This includes the Social Workers/Counsellors, Bereavement Support Team and the Chaplain, all of whom see care of the family as part of their work for however long you need them.
- **St Luke's Specialist Palliative Care Teams** (either in the Hospital or at home) who have cared for you, as well as your loved one, can still offer support to you.
- **Your Doctor:** You might not think that your doctor is interested or can help but they will want to make sure that you are well and may have details of local groups that can offer support.
- **Derriford Pastoral and Spiritual Care Team:** This includes chaplaincy support.
- **Never hesitate to ask for help.**

Children

Feelings of desolation, insecurity, anger and fear (as well as a variety of other feelings) following a bereavement are common to adults and children. Children's understanding is not the same as that of adults and their feelings may be expressed in their behaviour. For example, refusing to go to bed, quarrelling with friends and wanting a parent or special person in their life to be near them, in other words, 'clinging'.

Explaining to a child what happens when someone dies is one of the most difficult things to do. Sometimes it is better just to answer any questions as they arise, rather than offering an explanation. Children will ask questions about what has happened for a long time; this is how they begin to understand about death and eventually accept it.

When you are newly bereaved, it is important to include the children in the family mourning as much as you can. Even though they may not fully understand what is happening, they need to feel close to you and not left out. Try not to hide your tears from your children. If they see you cry it will let them know that it is all right for them to cry also.

Teenagers

Teenagers in many ways grieve more like adults than children. Bereavement at this time in their life can be especially difficult because of the rapid physical and emotional development that is taking place. They are more likely to share their feelings with their friends rather than their families.

It is important to realise that teenagers are not adults, and care should be taken not to burden them with adult responsibilities after a death, if this can possibly be avoided.



Local Telephone Numbers

St Luke's Bereavement Service

01752 436740

Chaplain

St Luke's Hospice: (01752) 401172

Derriford Hospital department of Pastoral & Spiritual Care
Team

(01752) 245255

The Mustard Tree Macmillan Centre

(01752) 763672

The Triangle Centres

Kingsbridge on Tuesdays (01548) 852349

Liskeard on Thursdays (01579) 335600

Tavistock on Fridays (01822) 615935

Jeremiah's Journey (5-18 yr olds) (01752) 763666

Department for Work and Pensions

Crownhill Court, Tailyour Road, Plymouth. PL6 5UE

Tel: (01752) 761600

Durley House, 5-11 Millbay Road, Plymouth. PL1 3LE

Tel: (01752) 272000

Cruse Bereavement Care Plymouth (01752) 408134

Head Office (0208) 9404818

Age Concern (01752) 665424

Samaritans (01752) 221666

Naval Family Services (01752) 555041



Other Useful Websites

Cruse Bereavement Care Useful leaflets & books

www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk

01752 408134

0208 9404818 (head office)

Age Concern

www.ageconcern.org.uk

01752 665424

Bereavement Information

www.bereavementinfo.com

National Widows

www.nawidows.org.uk

Merry Widows information site

www.merrywidow.me.uk

The Way Foundation (support group for those widowed under 50)

www.wayfoundation.org.uk

0870 011 3450

Support for Children

Winston's Wish (support for children)

www.winstonswish.org.uk

Riprap

www.riprap.org.uk

Rd4u

www.rd4u.org.uk

There are many books available at your local bookshops so choose the one that suits you best.

**Further copies of this booklet can be obtained from
St Luke's Bereavement Service**



We welcome your comments to help us improve the service

Please write to:

The Bereavement Service (PFS)
St Luke's Hospice
Stamford Road
Turnchapel
Plymouth
PL9 9XA

Telephone: 01752 401172

St Luke's Hospice Plymouth,
Stamford Road, Turnchapel, Plymouth, Devon, PL9 9XA

Telephone: 01752 401172 - Fax: 01752 482053
Email: info@stlukes-hospice.org.uk
Web Site: www.stlukes-hospice.org.uk

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