Bereavement Support

10 top tips

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MAC19358_Managing_Sexual_Dysfunction_tips

1 Identify people facing and following bereavement. Routinely identifying those caring for or connected to patients on your palliative care register means you can encourage communication and preparation before the death. Other bereaved people will be identified as they attend surgery for their own needs eg sleep difficulties, other symptoms, or problems at work, college or school. Bereavement is not an illness itself, but it does increase the risk of poor physical and mental health, and even of early death.

2 Ask about the 'hidden mourners'. Some get overlooked, including young children and those with learning difficulties.

3 Be proactive in making contact with bereaved people. Some practices send a bereavement card, offering an appointment. Whether you write, phone or visit, acknowledge what has happened, give information about what grief is like, and signpost practical and emotional support.

4 Provide a compassionate response. What most people want is for those around them – including their primary care team – to listen to and acknowledge their loss, and to understand grief isn't something you 'get over'. It can take people different amounts of time to come to terms with the death of someone close to them.

5 Be ready to answer queries. Some people will want information about the nature of grief, and whether their reaction is something to worry about. Many people need reassurance that what they are experiencing is grief and is normal. Reactions to a death are diverse and coping styles vary. Some may want to understand more about what happened at the end of the person's life.

6 Many bereaved people will manage without specialist support. Grief is a natural response and most will manage its challenges with support from family, friends and their familiar healthcare team.

7 Be aware that people need different support at different times: keep up to date details of local and national services. It can be helpful for people to be offered a range of options, and to access informal support (eg family and friends) alongside formal support such as 1:1 bereavement support or counselling, group or online support.

8 Know about local support services. Keep up to date information about what they offer to whom (eg drop in, peer support, counselling), and how to refer families.

9 Find ways of improving wider support for bereaved people. Use local commissioning structures to fill gaps in support. Your experience could enhance local training and awareness-raising.

10 Seek out development opportunities. Local and national organisations can help you keep up to date with current understandings of grief and support. This work can touch you personally and be overwhelming – make use of your support networks.

Useful Resources:

- https://www.macmillan.org.uk/
- https://www.cruse.org.uk/
- https://www.crusescotland.org.uk/
- https://www.ataloss.org/
- https://www.thegoodgrieftrust.org/
- https://www.sad.scot.nhs.uk/
- https://www.goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk/
- https://www.hopeagain.org.uk/ (for young people)
- https://childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/
- https://hospicefoundation.ie/our-supports-services/bereavement-loss-hub/

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