



Resource for volunteers supporting people who are self-isolating and are also experiencing loss and grief throughout the Covid-19 outbreak





# Providing remote support to someone experiencing loss and grief

This resource is for volunteers supporting people who are self-isolating and are also experiencing loss and grief (which may, or may not, be related to the Covid-19 outbreak). Many of us feel uncomfortable dealing with these feelings and we may feel powerless to help, especially if you have only recently “met” the person.

This resource is intended to give volunteers:

- An understanding of why loss and grief during self-isolation may be particularly difficult
- Tips on how you can help, even if your contact is indirect
- Contact details of organisations that can offer more in-depth support

We hope that this pack will give the confidence to support someone through a perfectly normal experience, and to look after yourself in the process. It is important to recognise that most people are under pressure at this time, and to recognise this in yourself as well as the person you are supporting. If it becomes too much, acknowledge that you may not be the best person to provide support right now, and talk to the organisation you are volunteering with to agree a way forward.





# Loss and grief during self-isolation



- During the global coronavirus pandemic we are facing a tragic loss of life, often under very difficult circumstances
- Deaths due to other causes will continue at the usual rate so not all bereavements during this time will be related to coronavirus
- People who are bereaved during this time may have to deal with increased trauma and may also be cut off from some of their usual support network
- Those who are already struggling with bereavement will also be affected





# Loneliness and Isolation



- Being bereaved can be an extremely lonely time. Talking with friends and family can be one of the most helpful ways to cope after someone close to us dies.
- We are in a situation where increasing numbers of people are being told to self-isolate and cut all but essential physical contact with others, this can have a major effect on impact on how a person feels, making them more isolated.
- This could make feelings of loneliness and grief more intense. It could mean a bereaved person having to stay by themselves in the same house they shared with the person who has died, bringing up painful reminders at every turn.





# Anger



- Feelings of anger and blame are common, and normal, after any bereavement
- When someone has died under sudden or traumatic circumstances it can make these feelings worse
- People may feel angry and helpless that this situation arose at all
- They may feel angry that their loved one did not receive the care they should have, for example if hospitals become overwhelmed and medical staff are forced to make difficult decisions
- They may feel angry with the government if they think there should have been more protection and stronger controls. Or they could be angry with people who took risks leading to infection
- They may feel angry with the person who died for not protecting themselves
- Let them talk about how they are feeling and about the person who has died – talking can be one of the most helpful things after someone dies





# Offering Support



- Remember that it is their experience, not yours
- Be patient & realistic, start where the person is at
- Do not think you have to provide or give answers or solutions
- Allow the person to control & finish the conversation
- Ask the bereaved person how they think they are coping
- People have very different ways of coping so support the person in finding what helps them
- Let your genuine concern and caring show
- Allow them to express as much unhappiness as they are feeling at the moment and are willing to share
- Encourage them to be patient with themselves, not to expect too much of themselves
- Have 'normal' conversations as well - give permission to 'take a break from grieving'





# Things to avoid



- Don't let a sense of helplessness keep you from reaching out
- Don't change the subject - even if the person is getting upset
- Don't talk too much, try to listen
- Don't give unsolicited advice or tell the person what to do
- Avoid clichés, e.g. 'time is a great healer'
- Don't change the subject when they mention their loss
- Don't avoid mentioning their loss out of fear of reminding them of their pain





# What to say?

Although there are no “wrong” things to say, there may be things that can be better said in a slightly different way:

- |   |                                   |   |  |
|---|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| ✗ | I know how you are feeling        | ✓ | I have no idea how you are feeling but am here if you would like to talk.                              |
| ✗ | It's time you should be moving on | ✓ | I can hear that you are still feeling the loss deeply but would like to support you if I can in anyway |
| ✗ | You need to focus on other things | ✓ | It must be very hard but I am here if there is anything you would like talk through                    |





# Supporting Someone by Telephone



Here are a few questions to ask, but bear in mind that not all the questions may be appropriate so be sensitive to individual circumstances etc.

- ? Are they managing to eat healthily?
- ? Are they managing to keep active?
- ? How are they keeping their mind active?
- ? Are they getting good quality sleep?
- ? How else are they looking after themselves?
- ? Do they have other people to talk to?





# Signposting to further support

If you think someone would benefit from talking further or needs more specialist support (by phone or online), you can direct them to any of the national organisations listed below.



Cruse Bereavement Care

0808 808 1677

[www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)



Silverline

0800 4 70 80 90

[www.thesilverline.org.uk](http://www.thesilverline.org.uk)



Samaritans

116 123

[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)





End of Life Partnership  
Spring Farm Business Centre  
Moss Lane  
Crewe  
CW1 4RJ

: 01270 310260

: [www.eolp.org.uk](http://www.eolp.org.uk)

