



GUEST MANUAL



The Bereavement Journey

Guest Manual

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Acknowledgements

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Contents

Introduction	7
Session 1 – Looking at loss	9
Session 2 – The pain of grief: how it feels.....	15
Session 3 – The pain of grief: how to deal with it.....	21
Session 4 – Coping with change	27
Session 5 – Moving forward	33
Session 6 – Faith questions (optional)	39
Helpful organisations.....	46
Booklist	48

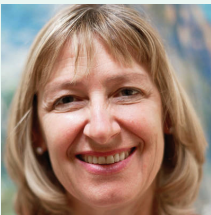
About the authors



Jane Oundjian

Jane trained as a general counsellor with Westminster Pastoral Foundation in 1993 and then went on to train with Cruse Bereavement Care. She worked as a one-to-one counsellor in her local community as well as helping to train future Cruse counsellors.

Jane lost her mother at the age of sixteen, and also her first child when he was fourteen months old. These experiences led her to develop The Bereavement Journey in 1995, a course designed to help grieving people in small groups. She ran this course at Holy Trinity Brompton for 23 years, and now continues to run it at her home in West Sussex.



Yvonne Richmond Tulloch

Session 6 is led by Revd Canon Yvonne Richmond Tulloch. Yvonne is an Anglican priest who has held various ministerial posts since her ordination in 1999. In 2008, her life changed when she was suddenly widowed.

Since then she has focused her attention on supporting the bereaved and promoting bereavement care, in particular as founder of *AtaLoss.org*. She currently runs The Bereavement Journey at Holy Trinity Brompton.

Welcome to The Bereavement Journey

Working through grief takes a long time and no two people have the same loss or the same journey. We hope during these weeks to be able to provide a few signposts for you along the way.

Hopefully, you will be able to attend all of the sessions of this course, as the talks are interdependent and the groups can become an oasis of safety.

The material we will use during these sessions is based on the work of William Worden, with additional material from other sources.

The Journey

- Session 1: Looking at loss
- Session 2: The pain of grief – how it feels
- Session 3: The pain of grief – how we deal with it
- Session 4: Coping with change
- Session 5: Moving forward
- Session 6: Faith questions (optional)

Some ground rules

To ensure that the group experience is as safe for everyone as possible, we ask that you accept the following ground rules:

- Confidentiality – what is said during the sessions stays here
- Respect the views of others without interrupting or challenging
- Provide space and time for all
- You have the right not to share or speak
- Please let one of the team know if you are not feeling okay

Session 1 – Looking at loss

Introductions

In small groups of two or three:

- Talk about your hopes and expectations for the course, why you are here and how you are feeling

In the big group:

- First exercise: Say your first name and one thing about yourself that is easy to share
- Second exercise: Say your name once more and in one sentence why you are here (who has died and how)

'It is a fearful thing to love what death can touch'

ANON

Attachment

Think about the attachments you have made throughout your life:

- Pre-birth (literal attachment) – the beginnings of relationship
- Feeding, 'bonding', well-being, connectedness
- As small children, being held, fed, holding hands, etc
- Growing up: siblings, grandparents, friends
- School, teachers, school friends, etc
- Teenage years
- As adults: students, work colleagues, those with similar interests to us
- Relationships, marriage and family, life partners, etc

The level of secure attachment that we have experienced as a child will influence the feelings of security, self-worth and significance we feel as an adult.

Separation

Separation is something we have to learn to deal with throughout our life because we cannot remain in relationship with everyone we have been close to:

- Birth (literal separation)
- As toddlers, at day nursery or babysitters, ‘holding the good image of mother’, we learn to cope with being separated from our parent or caregiver and wait for them to return, e.g. hide and seek games
- From others as we grow up, e.g. trips away from home, parents being absent, leaving home

These separations are natural and are about leaving one stage of life and moving forward to another. However, they can still be difficult or very lonely.

Not all separations are satisfactorily resolved and this can be painful to recall.

‘Your absence has gone through me like thread through a needle. Everything I do is stitched with its colour.’

W. S. MERWIN, POEMS ON THE UNDERGROUND

Loss

Oxford dictionary definition: ‘robbed, deprived, dispossessed, disinherited, ceasing to know the whereabouts of’.

Something has gone wrong...

‘Grief is the price we pay for love.’

HRH QUEEN ELIZABETH II AFTER 9/11

Loss is the unavoidable partner of love and attachment.

‘Only those people who avoid love can avoid grief.’

JOHN BRANTNER

- We each have our own personal history of loss. These losses are usually known to us but are sometimes unacknowledged
- Loss can be physical, emotional or spiritual

Group time

(Close manuals – everyone together)

Brainstorm the various losses that can be experienced apart from bereavement.

Our personal history of loss

Some examples of loss other than death:

Changing school • Homesickness • Losing one's home • Dreams/hopes
 Wallet • Phone • Keys • Photographs (e.g. fire) • Burglary • Mugging
 Childhood/Innocence • Accidents • Addiction • Birth of new sibling
 Adoption/adoptee • Empty nest • Confidence • Alzheimers • Imprisonment
 Health • Redundancy • Relationship break-up • Friends • Trust • Fertility
 Faith • Love • Role • Sex drive • Disfigurement • Limb • Faculties • Hair
 Disability • Mobility • Freedom • Control • Rape • Abuse • Retirement
 Job • Purpose • Emigration • Miscarriage • Abortion • Lifestyle • Identity
 Breast • Independence • Income • Success • Divorce

Some of the losses shown above will be within your experience. Others you may have witnessed, or can only imagine. Hopefully this list can help you to trace your own personal 'history of loss', and to assess how you have responded.

*'That response will largely determine the quality,
 the direction and the impact of our lives.'*

GERALD SITTSER

We will all suffer loss and adversity, but our response is key.

'Turn the maze of bereavement into a labyrinth of hope, working towards the centre – our soul.'

BRUNO BETTELHEIM

Accepting The Reality Of The Loss

It is often hard to accept the fact that someone has actually died, especially if they or we were living in another country, or we rarely saw them:

- Seeing the body or attending the funeral can be a great help
- We begin to accept the reality of what has happened; a necessary first step on the journey

A person represents more in our life than just our relationship with them.

- What was their 'role' in our life?
- Some relationships are complicated; the feelings are ambiguous and/or mixed
- How much of our feeling of loss is based on reality and how much on wishful thinking or unfulfilled hopes and longings?
- Did we get from the relationship what we most wanted or needed?
- Can we accept things as they really are and not as we hoped they might be?

The bereavement therapist, Jim Kuykendall, says:

'There is no such thing as 'very few losses'. We've all had tons of losses and we need to take ownership of them. We can be overwhelmed by them and go under, or we can recognise them as integral to living.'

Group time

1. Talk about the various losses in your life.
2. Identify what is missing in your life since your bereavement.

Notes

Session 2 – The pain of grief: how it feels

'How do you crack wide open and stay whole?'

ANON

- Grief isolates us; it throws us into a hostile and alien place, a 'landscape without a vocabulary'
- Grieving provokes many feelings in us; we think, feel and do many things that are difficult for us to control and with which we are uncomfortable
- Our life is divided into 'before' and 'after'

'It dawns on you quite suddenly that life is never, ever going to be the same again, that the whole world has changed in a moment.'

JUSTIN WELBY, ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

What we might feel

Shock • Disbelief • Numbness • Denial • Helplessness • Incompleteness
Anger • Dread • Bitterness • Anxiety • Loneliness • Guilt • Regret
Insecurity • Abandonment • Relief • Emancipation • Shame • Isolation
Loneliness • Fear (e.g. future or us/others dying) • Apathy • Anger • Guilt
Loss of control • Missing physical touch/sexual intimacy

What we might do

Dreaming • Having nightmares • Searching/calling • Behaving absent-mindedly
Crying • Over-activity (work/social) • Sleep irregularities • 'Seeing' the person
Changes in eating habits • Avoiding reminders/holding on to reminders
Need to tell the story • Withdrawing socially • Diminished concentration

What we might think

Confusion • Preoccupation • Depression • Sense of presence • Resentment
Scared to lose memories • Thoughts of suicide (to join them/to end the pain)
Envy of others • Am I going mad? • Emptiness • At last...’ • ‘I wish...’
Loss of purpose • There can't be a God

How our body may react

Lack of energy • Exhaustion • Feeling generally unwell • Dry mouth
Breathlessness • Panic attacks • Tightness in chest • Tension • Hollow stomach
Localised pain (where they had pain) • Oversensitivity to noise • ‘Feeling paralysed’
Nausea • Trembling • Lump in throat • Difficulty swallowing food • Shaky

You will have other words to add to this list.

‘Your deepest life message will come out of your deepest pain.’

PASTOR RICK WARREN

Group time

1. Talk about the various feelings and behaviours that you are experiencing.
2. Which ones do you find most difficult or surprising?

How is death viewed in society and the outside world?

‘We live in an age where we think death is an option.’

DAVID HOCKNEY, ARTIST

How does the world around us respond to our loss?

- Death has been banished to the place where dying is done
- There is little room for the realities of ageing, sickness and dying
- Old people are marginalised and undervalued
- Death has become the new taboo, a ‘death-denying’ society
- Our language is full of platitudes. People try to ‘shut us down’

'To have life in focus, we must have death in our field of vision.'

BISHOP NIGEL MCCULLOCH

Work

If you work, what has been the response at your place of work to your bereavement?

- From your boss/line manager?
- From colleagues?
- How much time off were you given?
- Did you choose not to mention it at all?

'I am aware that I am an embarrassment to all my friends.'

C. S. LEWIS

Friends

What has been the response of your friends?

- Have some 'moved forward' to support you?
- Have some distanced themselves?
- "Has anyone crossed the road yet?" (A question asked by one widow to another)

Social groups

What has your experience been of a group you attend?

What about church?

- Really supportive?
- The hardest place of all?

What would help us in these situations?

- More cultural awareness of how grief feels?
- More ritual?
- Wearing black?
- Specific mourning time?

Family

We might imagine the family to be the easiest place to grieve but supporting one another within the family is not always easy.

- Family members often grieve alone
- A family bereavement marks the ‘death’ of the old family and the beginning of a different family
- There is often the need for a period of adjustment to new roles
- How much were you allowed to express your feelings in your family of origin (the family in which you grew up)? What was permitted when we were children has a bearing on what we think we have the right to feel and express as adults
- It may not be easy to express your feelings with family members. Sometimes a simple sentence will sow a seed that may lead to a breakthrough:
‘I have written down a few thoughts about Dad, may I send them to you?’
‘Actually I am attending a bereavement group at the moment’

Group time

1. What kind of response have you had to your bereavement from those around you (family, work, friends, groups you attend)?
2. What might be a more helpful response from those around you?

Notes

Notes

Session 3 – The pain of grief: how we deal with it

Handling difficult emotions

Guilt, regret and anger can be particularly difficult to handle.

Guilt and regret

Regret is disappointment with ourselves; the things we did or didn't do or we did or didn't say. Guilt is a stronger feeling:

- Guilt when faced with suicide
- Survivor guilt about escaping the illness/accident
- Guilt at still being alive, enjoying life
- Guilt at beginning to move on

It is helpful to assess false guilt versus real guilt.

Reality test

- What did I do?
- Did I do my best with the knowledge I had at the time?
- Did the dying person allow me to do what I would have liked to do?

Confession and forgiveness – start with forgiving yourself.

Anger

Anger is very common in grief. We tend to deny it, to repress it or to misplace it.

Anger is sometimes hard for people of faith. It is a confusing feeling for those grieving.

Where does anger come from?

- From elemental and primitive sources
- A reaction to abandonment, risk, vulnerability, fear
- A typical regressive reaction

- Frustration at our impotence and powerlessness in the face of death
- Anger can sometimes be used as a mask to hide hurt and helplessness

'Anger is never buried dead, it is always buried alive!'

SELWYN HUGHES

What do we do with our anger?

We may misplace angry feelings:

- Our angry feelings may be directed towards the wrong person or thing, an easier place to put them than discovering their true source
- We feel the need to blame someone, especially early on
- We need to find the right place to direct anger, including sometimes towards the one who has died

We may repress angry feelings:

- This doesn't mean they have gone away; they may burst out inappropriately or when we don't expect them
- Repressed anger may cause stress or contribute to depression or even illness

We may express angry feelings:

- It is helpful to try to reach the angry feelings present in bereavement, especially around suicide. They are normal. They usually pass
- Be brave enough to recognise and acknowledge angry feelings
- Talk about them with someone trustworthy
- Write about them
- Work with paint, clay or some other tactile substance
- Punch cushions or a mattress; or destroy something (that it's okay to harm!)
- Walk somewhere remote (e.g. a beach or a hillside) and shout out
- Exercise or sport can release tension

Don't be worried if you don't feel anger, but if you do, don't feel scared or guilty about it. It is part of the grief work.

Group time

1. Talk about any feelings of regret, guilt or anger that you may be experiencing.
2. How have you dealt, or might you deal, with this?

The differing ways we deal with grief

'Patterns of grief are like fingerprints, personal to us only.'

GRIEF SPECIALIST, COLIN MURRAY PARKES

Avoiding or delaying grieving

Many of us consciously or unconsciously use this defence mechanism to try to escape the pain of grief.

Sometimes it is the only way to survive. It enables us to function for a period of time or to manage the fear.

Some common ways of avoiding/delaying are:

- Increased use of alcohol
- Drug abuse
- Over-prolonged use of prescription medicines
- Exaggerated work or social activity; extreme 'busyness'
- Restless travelling or constantly moving house
- Suspending our feelings/keeping them on hold because of uncertainty (e.g. in cases of uncertain death or missing person)

These kinds of responses can delay grief to a later date. The pain is still there buried deep within. It may 'leak' out as anger, depression or illness, or it may erupt with another subsequent loss.

Being denied grieving or needing to keep strong for others

This can easily occur for very good reasons such as:

- Caring for others, especially children, which can deny us the space and freedom to grieve
- Having a particular task to accomplish, e.g. examinations, work project

- Children (hidden grievers) who are often over-protected from sadness and denied grieving by well-meaning adults. We don't want to upset them; we keep them away at important moments; they may not share in or contribute to a funeral. We may fail to 'model' to them how to grieve. They cannot ask important questions. Perhaps you were once a child like that?
- Pressure from others around us to feel 'better'. People with a faith often feel that they should be doing better than they are
- Outside disapproval of the person who died or our relationship with them

One encouraging aspect of delayed or denied grieving is that it is never too late to do good grief work, even many years after the death.

*'Give sorrow words. The grief that does not speak
whispers the o'erfraught heart and bids it break.'*

FROM MACBETH, WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Facing up to grieving and doing the 'grief work'

How do we engage with grief?

- Thinking things through/processing
- Reading helpful books
- Talking to someone we trust
- Writing, painting etc
- Joining a therapeutic group
- Prayer

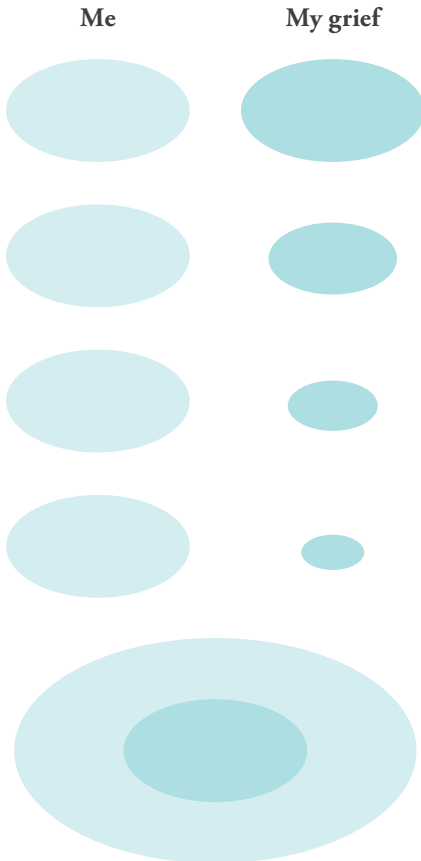
Signs that we are willing to journey through grief:

- Being here in this group!
- Facing the feelings and allowing the pain and the insecurity of grief to surface
- Depriving previously unexpressed thoughts of their power by expressing them
- Responding to what has happened, not just as a victim but proactively

'The only way out is through.'

ANON

Lois Tonkin's model:



Our grief can feel as big as we are, overwhelming and too much to bear.

We imagine that the task ahead is to reduce our grief to a manageable size. Yet what does that say about the significance of the one who has died?

In fact, the bereavement journey enlarges us. We grow to incorporate our loss, to keep it safe and with us, yet we are free to function and move on.

'The person whom we love is no longer where they were before; they are now wherever we are'

PARAPHRASED FROM ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Group time

1. Talk about how possible it has been for you to grieve.
2. Can you identify any ways in which you are growing through the grief process?

Notes

Session 4 – Coping with change

'I think the key thing is to recognise that you are going to go on a journey, and you have an element of choice about what kind of journey that is going to be.'

JUSTIN WELBY, ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

Bereavement brings about much change in our lives. It challenges us to confront and adapt certain aspects of ourselves.

'When does it get better Ma'am?'
'It doesn't get better, but we get better at it.'

HRH QUEEN ELIZABETH THE QUEEN MOTHER, SOME YEARS
AFTER THE DEATH OF HER HUSBAND KING GEORGE VI

A question of identity

When a loved one has died people sometimes feel that they are aware of a loss of identity.

We think of ourselves in part in relation to our loved ones.

Without them 'Who am I now?'

It can be hard to answer the difficult questions:

- "Are you married?"
- "How many children do you have?"
- "Where do your parents live?"
- "Do you have any brothers or sisters?"

We may experience a temporary 'loss of self'.

Continuing bonds

After someone close to us has died, it is very usual that we take on something of their identity. It is a way of continuing the bond of relationship:

- Using their belongings, e.g. playing their music, wearing their watch
- Wearing items of clothing
- Taking on their responsibilities, tasks
- Taking up their interests/hobby or going to places they liked
- Carrying out their plans
- Keeping up with their friends/contacts

But we also have to begin to find and explore our new identity and maybe to accept some difficult truths about ourselves.

'I can see that there is a future for me but I am going to have to work at making it happen.'

COURSE GUEST

A journey of separation

This happens in stages:

- Initially we may make decisions with them in mind:
‘What would **they** do here?’
- As we grow more confident we might think:
‘What would they want **me** to do here?’
- Finally we make decisions, for ourselves alone:
‘This really only concerns **me**. What do **I** want to do?’

Group time

1. How do you answer people's difficult questions?
2. Have you taken on anything as a continuing bond with the one you have lost?

Funerals, memorials and anniversaries

Funerals

- Many decisions have to be made when arranging a funeral, usually in a hurry
- Maybe the deceased left some helpful guidelines?
- Many formalities have to be completed and arrangements have to be made
- Hopefully you were given choices and were encouraged to make the arrangements feel personal
- The funeral often passes as a 'blur'. It may be hard to remember how you got through it
- After all the 'busyness' around the funeral comes the beginning of a greater emptiness

'So this is what it is, just more of the same.'

ROSEMARY

Memorials

People's thoughts sometimes turn to a lasting memorial:

- Headstone (usually a year or so after the burial)
- Plaque, e.g. after cremation
- Tree or bush in a garden
- Park bench or similar
- School prize
- Charity, fund
- Event, e.g. sponsored walk, bike ride, concert

What if we were not able to be at the funeral or say a proper 'goodbye'?

Recognise why this was; sometimes the person doesn't allow a goodbye if they are in denial about dying.

You could:

- Hold some kind of memorial celebration or event, however large or small
- Plant a bush or tree or take flowers to a meaningful place

- Make a journey or visit the place where the death happened or that holds special memories
- Create a scrapbook, photo album or memory box about them and gather new things to put in it
- Write a letter of farewell, expressing your unspoken feelings to the person who has died, or write down your feelings for yourself
- Get in touch with a relative or someone who knew them well. They might be able to share something new with you about their lives or provide you with some photographs that you have never seen

'Each one of us can be a creative survivor.'

JUDY TATELBAUM, *THE COURAGE TO GRIEVE*

Anniversaries

Anniversaries, significant dates and public holidays are often dreaded by bereaved people. There are so many of them:

- Your birthday
- Their birthday
- Wedding anniversary
- Family celebrations, e.g. 18th birthday party, wedding
- Christmas, Easter or other religious festival
- Mother's Day/Father's Day
- Valentine's Day
- Bank Holiday weekends
- New Year's Eve/Day, when the death first becomes 'last year'
- The anniversary of the death

Try to make a flexible plan for the day, one that allows you the choices you need. Don't let yourself be organised too much by other people. The expectation of the day is usually worse than the actual thing.

Be aware of your own internal clock

- 'Why am I feeling so low? Ah, this is the time of year when...'
- Take time to think about what is going on
- Be flexible and be kind to yourself

Group time

1. Talk about the funeral or how you have been able to say 'goodbye'.
2. How are you coping with anniversaries and special dates?

Notes

Notes

Session 5 – Moving forward

Withdrawing our emotional energy from the person who has died and beginning to re-invest it in the future.

Eventually we will use our emotional energy to think about the future, to contemplate change and to make plans. We will experience ‘pinpoints of light’ in the gloom. As we begin to look forward, instead of constantly looking back, some positive signs of recovery might be:

- Sorting out their belongings or their clothes, deciding what to keep and what can go
- Finding an acceptable place for their possessions to go
- Putting photographs out if they were hidden away
- Changing the use of the person’s bedroom, study, workshop, shed or other space that was ‘theirs’
- Moving home/changing job; doing things that have been put ‘on hold’
- Renewed engagement with the outside world – listening to the news, reading more widely, going to the cinema
- Being more comfortable on your own or becoming more sociable – seeing friends, initiating plans to go out, going on holiday
- Being aware of having ‘survived’; grief hasn’t destroyed us
- Life being worth living; being able to enjoy something and laugh without feeling guilty
- Taking care of one’s appearance or fitness; a general improvement in health; sleep/eating patterns returning to normal
- Re-thinking priorities; sorting out what is really important in life
- Daring to love again; realising that we cannot go through life avoiding love to avoid further pain; getting close to someone without pulling away

*‘I know now that there are other people to be loved,
and it doesn’t mean that I love Daddy any less.’*

YOUNG GIRL, ABOUT THE DEATH OF HER FATHER.

These changes are all signs that the intense period of grief is ending.

Finishing intense grieving

People often ask: 'When does mourning finish?' 'Am I reaching the end?'

Finishing means coming to the end of the work. Although grieving never really ends, in many ways we do finish:

- We learn to incorporate the person into who we are
- Our grief is no longer so intense, unpredictable and raw
- It becomes part of our deepest experience
- We are feeling better
- We realise we are functioning/managing fairly well
- We find ourselves enjoying some things/experiencing moments of happiness

New upsets may revive old feelings, but these should quickly pass.

However, very significant or traumatic losses can be particularly difficult to come to terms with.

'I carry her with me.'

THE PIANIST, JOANNA MACGREGOR, OF HER DAUGHTER WHO DIED.

Remember the diagram that showed how we increase our capacity to carry the loss.

For the period of intense mourning to end:

- We need to understand that what is unresolved or unfinished (e.g. holding on to feelings of anger, unforgiveness or guilt) can reduce our capacity for living
- It takes courage and perseverance
- It is our decision

The late Christopher Reeve (from the original Superman films), who became a quadriplegic after a riding accident, said:

'Suffering is inevitable, misery is a choice.'

A mother, after the death of her teenage son, wrote:

'I decided almost immediately that this tragedy could not become the defining moment of my life. It was not to swallow me up.'

At the right time we make a choice...

Group time

1. Can you identify any ways in which you have moved forward since you were bereaved?
2. Do you believe that things will improve over time?

Looking at endings

Coming to The Bereavement Journey for the last time represents an ending, albeit a small one. There may be mixed feelings, such as relief and sadness.

The death was an ending. When someone dies, sometimes the ending and goodbye can be surprisingly positive. But, as we have mentioned, very often there is no opportunity for a 'good' ending and we may feel a need to do something to try to put that right.

- Finishing the intense period of grieving is about an ending
- Hanging on to such things as unforgiveness or anger can get us 'stuck'
- We may wonder, 'As my grief diminishes, will I lose them all over again?'
- Moving forward requires an act of will
- We cannot return to the pre-grief state now that we understand what death means

'My grief is all I have of her.'

TEENAGE GIRL, OF HER SISTER

Reminder: our individual experience of grief

We all grieve in a different way and at a different pace. Many factors will affect how an individual grieves. The journey is ours alone.

Factors that affect our moving forward:

- Our relationship with the deceased; how close was it, how secure?
- Was there ambivalence or an unresolved issue with the person who has died?
- Other concurrent stresses in our lives such as lack of money or poor health, a child in trouble or disagreement over the will
- Our personality type: introvert/extrovert
- Our culture and social background
- Our age and gender
- Our mental health history
- Our own previous experience of loss and death. Have we worked through previous losses or buried them?
- The type of death: natural, accidental, suicidal, homicidal (murder)

'How a person dies will have much to say about how a survivor grieves.'

These factors make your path yours and yours alone. So don't be drawn into worrying about what is 'right' and 'wrong'. Don't take other people's recommendations too much to heart. Trust your own intuition.

The ending of this course

What you might find helpful going forward

- More support – perhaps individual counselling?
- Someone to talk to who will be supportive and trustworthy?
- A visit to your GP?
- More understanding about bereavement, e.g. reading?
- A creative outlet or a new activity such as art or writing a journal, singing or a sport?
- Find out more about the person who has died or make an album or a memory box?

- Find another support group or attend another course?
- Visit the *AtaLoss.org* website to find other support services and appropriate help.

Good endings

Saying goodbye and making good endings can be difficult for many of us, especially if we have experienced a bad ending such as a sudden death

However, endings can be positive...

- Making a good ending takes a certain confidence, which some of us have had knocked out of us
- The ending of this course can be an exercise in finishing well

To close

- There is no magic solution to the problem of loving and losing
- We have to engage with our loss and embrace the opportunity to grow
- We need to trust in our own intuition to guide us through our personal bereavement journey

Group time

1. How do you feel about this group coming to an end?
2. What positive steps might you take next?

Optional Session 6 – Faith questions

*'Forget the God you don't believe in and seek the God
who believes in you.'*

THE IONA NIGHT PRAYER

When someone dies we often find ourselves asking faith questions about:

God

- Why has God allowed this to happen to me?
- Where is God now?
- Can there possibly be a God?

The afterlife

- What happens after death?
- Where is my loved one now?
- Can they see or hear me?
- Can I talk to them?
- Will I see them again?
- Is there such a thing as life after death?

Life

- What's the point of continuing?
- What purpose does my life have now?

Few people when bereaved find their faith unaffected; it can be strengthened and become powerfully sustaining or be deeply challenged.

Platitudes can be unhelpful

- 'God is in control'; 'It's all in God's plan'
- 'God heals'
- 'Only the good die young'
- 'She's in a better place'

Some people have spiritual experiences they can't explain.

Attending a place of worship can be hard

- Stirs the emotions
- Reminders of our life, our loved one and the funeral
- Rethinking/questioning meaning
- Inability to pray

Death is not good but it can lead to some of the most significant and enriching discoveries of life.

Frequently asked questions

Why does God cause people to die?

Why did God not answer my prayers?

Why does God heal some people and not others?

Group time

1. Before you were bereaved what was your perspective of God?
2. How, if at all, has that changed?
3. Before you were bereaved how important to you was prayer?
4. How, if at all, has that changed?

Frequently asked questions (continued)

Can a person who didn't know Jesus go to heaven?

Where do we go after death?

Can we communicate with the dead?

What about suicide?

Reflection time

Are you angry with God?
Is there someone you need to forgive?
Do you feel bad about something said or done?
Is there something left unsaid or not done?
Is there something you would like to say?
What might you want to pray?

Bible verses for reflection, if desired

To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal? Says the Holy One.
Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these?

Isaiah 40:25–26

God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea.

Psalms 46:1–2

The eternal God is your refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms.

Deuteronomy 33:27

Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary,
They will walk and not be faint.

Isaiah 40:31

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;
In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 3:5–6

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

John 10:10

When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' When Jesus saw her weeping... he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. 'Where have you laid him?' He asked. 'Come and see, Lord,' they replied. Jesus wept.

John 11:32–35

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles.

2 Corinthians 1:3–4

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not be in want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul.
He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Psalms 23

The love of God

Poem by Vanessa Barker

Wider than the imagination
Deeper than the hurt inside
Higher than many aspirations
And longer than any separation
Is the love, the love of God.

Stronger than the grip of shyness
Warmer than a secure embrace
Safer than unexpressed thoughts
And lovelier than a soft voice
Is the love, the love of God.

**For hard copy versions of Session 6 with added material,
'Faith Questions in Bereavement', visit thebereavementjourney.org**

Organisations offering information and support after a death

AtaLoss.org

An online directory of UK wide services, resources and information for the bereaved

www.ataloss.org

Cruse Bereavement Care

Counselling and support for the bereaved

Daytime helpline: 0808 808 1677

Email helpline: helpline@cruse.org.uk

www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk

The Samaritans

Free helpline 24 hours a day, 365 days a year

Tel: 116 123

Care for the Family

Care for the Family runs Bereaved Parents Support and Widowed Young Support

029 2081 0800

www.care-for-the-family.org.uk

GriefTalk

Support for anyone who is bereaved

Tel: 0808 802 0111

The Bereavement Advice Centre

For practical advice

0800 634 9494

The Bereavement Trust

0800 435455 or 0800 9177416

WAY (Widowed and Young) Foundation

Support for those under 50 when bereaved of a partner

01332 869222

www.widowedandyoung.org.uk

Silverline

Support for the over 50s

0800 4708090

Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide (SOBS)

0300 111 5065 uksobs.org

SAMM – Support after Murder and Manslaughter

0845 8723440 or 0121 472 2912

www.samm.org.uk

SADS UK – Sudden Arrhythmic Death Syndrome

Support for those affected by sudden cardiac death

01277 811215 www.sadsuk.org.uk

Brake – road safety charity

Telephone support for those bereaved as a result of a road crash

0808 800 0401 www.brake.org.uk

The Lone Twin Network

Voluntary support group for lone twins over the age of 18

lonetwinnetwork.org.uk

Organisations offering information and support after the death of a baby or child

Miscarriage Association

Supporting those who have been affected by the loss of a baby in pregnancy, whether recently or long ago

Tel: 01924 200799

www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk

SANDS – Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society

www.sands.org.uk

Helpline 0808 164 3332

helpline@sands.org.uk

The Lullaby Trust (formerly FSID)

Supports parents whose babies have died suddenly

Helpline 0808 802 6868

support@lullabytrust.org.uk

www.lullabytrust.org.uk

The Compassionate Friends

Supporting those who have suffered the death of a child

Helpline 0345 1232304

www.tcf.org.uk

Child Bereavement UK

Supports families when a child dies and children/young people who are bereaved

Helpline 0800 02 888 40

www.childbereavementuk.org

The Childhood Bereavement Network

For those supporting bereaved children
childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk

Winston's Wish

Supports bereaved children and young people

Helpline 08088 020 021

www.winstonswish.org

Cardiac Risk in the Young

Supports those bereaved through young cardiac death (35 or under)

Tel: 01737 363222

www.c-r-y.org.uk

Child Death Helpline

For anyone who has lost a child of any age, any time

Freephone 0800 282 986

or 0808 800 6019 from a mobile

www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk

Childline

Support for the under 25s

Tel: 0800 111

Booklist

Bereavement, Grieving and Loss

- Kate Boydell, *Death... and How to Survive it* (Vermilion, 2005)
- Jane Brooks, *Midlife Orphan* (Berkley Publishing Group, 1999)
- Hope Edelman, *Motherless Daughters*
(Perseus Books US; second revised edition, 1996)
- Linda Feinberg, *I'm Grieving As Fast As I Can* (New Horizon Press Inc., 1994)
- Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Beacon Press, 2006)
- Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (Simon & Schuster, reprint 1997)
- Elisabeth Kubler-Ross & David Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving*
(Simon & Schuster Ltd, 2005)
- Bill Merrington, *101 Ways to Cope with Grief and Loss* (Kevin Mayhew Ltd, 2007)
- Colin Murray Parkes, Bereavement, *Studies in Grief in Adult Life* (Penguin, 1998)
- Lily Pincus, *Death and the Family: The Importance of Mourning*
(Schocken Books, 1989)
- Phyllis R. Silverman & Madelyn Kelly, *A Parent's Guide to Raising Grieving Children*
(OUP, 2009)
- Judy Tattelbaum, *The Courage to Grieve* (William Heinemann Ltd; new edition, 1993)
- Judith Viorst, *Necessary Losses* (Free Press, 1998)
- Susan Wallbank, *The Empty Bed: Bereavement and the Loss of Love*
(Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 2005)
- William Worden, *Children and Grief* (Guilford Press, 2002)
- William Worden, *Grief Counselling and Grief Therapy* (Routledge, 2003)

Suicide

- Kate Hill, *The Long Sleep: Young People and Suicide* (Virago Press, 1995)
- Kay Redfield Jamison, *Night Falls Fast* (Picador, 2000)
- Alison Wertheimer, *A Special Scar* (Routledge, 2001)

Autobiography

Anna Blundy, *Every Time We Say Goodbye* (Arrow Books Ltd, 1999)

– death of an absent father

Simon Carr, *The Boys Are Back in Town* (Arrow Books Ltd, 2001)

– father bringing up boys after the death of his wife

Joan Didion, *The Year of Magical Thinking* (Harper Perennial, 2006)

Natascha McElhone, *After You* (Penguin, 2011)

Blake Morrison, *And When Did You Last See Your Father?* (Granta Books, 2007)

Lindsay Nicholson, *Living on the Seabed* (Vermilion, 2005)

Simon Thomas, *Love, Interrupted* (Trigger Publishing 2019)

Autobiographic Novel

Susan Hill, *In the Springtime of the Year* (Vintage, 2012)

Poetry

Elizabeth Basset, *Beyond the Blue Mountains: An anthology on living and dying* (Continuum International Publishing Group, 1999)

Christopher Reid, *A Scattering* (Arete Books Ltd, 2009)

Agnes Whitaker (ed.), *All in the End is Harvest* (anthology)

(Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 1984)

Books for children and young people

John Burningham, *Granpa* (Red Fox, 2003)

Diana Crossley, *Muddles, Puddles and Sunshine* (Hawthorn Press, 2000)

Tracey Cusick & Simon Hepworth, *When Someone Dies*

(Eric F. Box Funeral Directors, 2004)

Marge Heegaard, *When Someone Very Special Dies*

(Woodland Press; reissue edition, 1991)

Marge Heegaard, *When Something Terrible Happens*

(Woodland Press; reissue edition, 1991)
Mary Joslin, *The Goodbye Boat* (Lion Children's Books, 2005)
Ginny Perkins & Leon Morris, *Remembering Mum*
(A & C Black Publishers Ltd; new edition, 1996)
Trevor Romain, *What on Earth do you do When Someone Dies?*
(Free Spirit Publishing Inc., 2003)
Michael Rosen, *Michael Rosen's Sad Book* (Walker, 2011)
Doris Stickney, *Water Bugs and Dragonflies*
(The Pilgrim Press; revised edition, 2004)
Stubbs, Stokes & Baker, *Beyond the Rough Rock (supporting a child bereaved through suicide)*,
(Winston's Wish; 2nd revised edition, 2008)
Susan Varley, *Badger's Parting Gifts* (Picture Lions, 1994)
Mary Williams, *Someone Has Died Suddenly* (Brake, 2009)

Teenagers/Young Adults

Earl A Grollman, *Straight Talk About Death for Teenagers* (Beacon Press, 1993)
Susan Wallbank, *Facing Grief: Bereavement & the Young Adult*
(Lutterworth Press; revised edition, 1991)
Susan Wallbank, *My Father Died* (Cruse; 4th edition, 1998)
Susan Wallbank, *My Mother Died* (Cruse; 4th edition, 1998)
Alan D. Wolfelt, *Healing your Grieving Heart* (Companion Press, 2001)

Christian Books

Wendy Bray & Diana Priest, *Insight into Bereavement* (CWR, 2006)
Margaret Brownley, *Grieving God's Way* (Thomas Nelson, 2012)
Fiona Castle, *Rainbows Through the Rain, An Anthology of Hope*
(Hodder & Stoughton, 1998)
Fiona Castle, *What a Wonderful World: An Anthology of Joy*
(Hodder & Stoughton, 2000)
Verdell Davies, *Let Me Grieve – But Not For Ever* (W Publishing Group, 2003)
Wendy Duffy, *Children & Bereavement* (Church House Publishing, 2003)
Janine Fair, *Surprised by Grief* (on being widowed young), (IVP, 2010)

Bob Gass, *Joy Comes in the Morning* (Synergy Publishers, 2004)
Pete Greig, *God on Mute* (Kingsway Publications, 2007)
Karen Hanford, *The Loneliest Grief* (miscarriage, still birth or infant death)
(Autumn House, 1994)
Albert Y. Hsu, *Grieving a Suicide* (Inter-Varsity Press, 2002)
Faye Landrum, *Acquainted with Grief; Encouraging Meditations for Times of Loss*
(Barbour Publishing, 2006)
C. S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed* (Faber & Faber; main edition, 2013)
Sue Mayfield, *First Steps Through Bereavement* (Lion Hudson, 2007)
Sue Mayfield, *Living With Bereavement* (Lion Hudson, 2008)
Henri Nouwen, *Our Greatest Gift. A Meditation on Dying and Caring* (Hodder &
Stoughton, 1994)
Kathy O'Brien, *Inside Grief* (Printworks; revised edition, 2012)
Joey O'Connor, *Children & Grief* (Kindle, 2004)
Jennifer Rees Larcombe, *Beauty from Ashes: Readings for Times of Loss*
(Bible Reading Fellowship, 2000)
Gerald Sittser, *A Grace Disguised* (Zondervan, 2005)
Gerald Sittser, *A Grace Revealed* (Zondervan, 2012)
Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Lament for a Son* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1996)
Philip Yancey, *Where is God When it Hurts?* (Zondervan Publishing House, revised
edition 1994)

Booklets

Harold Bauman, *Living through Grief* (Lion Publishing, 1999)
Beth Spring, *Childless: The Hurt and the Hope* (Lion Publishing, 1989)
Elaine Storkey, *Losing a Child* (Lion Publishing, 1999)
Philip Yancey, *When Life Hurts* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2004)
The Path Not Chosen (CWR)
Living with Loss (Lifewords)
Yvonne Richmond Tulloch, *Faith Questions in Bereavement*
(from www.thebereavementjourney.org, 2020)



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from www.thebereavementjourney.org