

WHAT TO DO AT HOME FOLLOWING A BEREAVEMENT: PARENTS AND CARERS GUIDE (SECONDARY & FURTHER EDUCATION)

Young people may understand death, but this does not mean they find it easier to cope. They often grieve differently from adults and younger children. They may want independence while still needing reassurance and support.

How children may respond:

Young people may:

- Appear withdrawn, angry or unusually quiet
- Minimise their feelings or say they are "fine"
- Show mood swings or heightened emotions
- Seek privacy or push adults away
- Worry about the future, safety, or further loss
- Experience sleep difficulties, headaches, or changes in appetite
- Struggle with concentration and focus
- Take on extra responsibility at home
- Engage in risk-taking behaviours (older teens)

All of these responses can be normal reactions to grief.



Talking to your young person:

- Be honest and clear, using appropriate language
- Allow them to lead when and how they talk
- Respect their need for space, but keep checking in
- Avoid minimising their grief by dismissing uncomfortable emotions
- Validate feelings by saying things like, "That sounds really hard" or "I can see why you'd feel that way"
- Accept that they may talk more openly with peers than adults
- Let them know support is available beyond home



Helping them feel safe and supported

- Encourage rest, routine and basic self-care
- Reassure them about who is caring for them
- Be physically and emotionally available
- Keep expectations realistic and flexible
- Give clear, age-appropriate information
- Encourage healthy peer connections
- Tell them support exists, even if they don't need it right now



Social media and online platforms

- Be aware of online reminders, anniversaries and posts
- Support them if they receive hurtful or insensitive messages
- Encourage breaks from social media if it becomes overwhelming
- Talk about what feels helpful or unhelpful online

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Managing school, exams, and pressure

- Reassure them that support and adjustments are available
- Encourage open communication with school
- Reduce pressure around homework and revision where possible
- Help prioritise rest over perfection
- Remind them that grief can affect memory, focus, and motivation



When additional support may help

- You may wish to seek extra support if your young person:
- Is becoming increasingly withdrawn or isolated
- Shows significant changes in mood or behaviour
- Expresses hopelessness or distress over time
- Is struggling to attend school or function day-to-day

Supporting older teens in further education

- Acknowledge pressures around exams, future plans, and independence
- Understand they may want control over who knows and what support they accept
- Encourage balance between responsibilities and rest
- Reassure them that it's okay to pause plans or change direction
- Continue offering support even if they say they don't need it

Keeping communication open over time

- Grief can resurface weeks or months later
- Anniversaries, exams, or transitions can be particularly hard
- Young people may revisit their grief as they grow and mature
- Ongoing support may be needed even after things look 'back to normal'



The school is here to support young people and families during this time.

Please contact a member of staff if you would like support or information about bereavement services, including free online training led by 2wish.