

There are many more people losing loved ones right now, whether from the COVID-19 virus or other causes. Losing a loved one is never easy, but during this crisis it is, and will continue to be, a particularly hard time for people experiencing a bereavement.

Bereavement during COVID-19

A death from coronavirus may feel very sudden, unexpected or preventable. We may have had to make very difficult decisions before and after the death. Many of us will not be able to care for our loved one or say goodbye when we might have under different circumstances.

Most of us will also be cut off from our usual ways of grieving a loss too. Whether it's traditional and religious ceremonies or just being together, the ways we have learned to cope with death as communities are not available to us at this time.

This, as well as the loss of someone we felt very connected with, may trigger feelings of really upsetting isolation and loneliness.

This means the ways we can be there for each other are even more important.

We can support each other by being ready to reach out and listen

Talking about death is never easy. If someone we know has lost a loved one we may shy away from the topic or even avoid talking to the person at all.

This is nothing to be ashamed of. We may feel others are better able to help that person, or we may be concerned about saying the wrong thing or making them feel worse. Sometimes it feels like talking about bad things might be more upsetting for the person affected.

Unfortunately this can mean people feel they are not allowed to talk about their grief, or that their difficult feelings would be a burden on others.

This is why giving someone the chance to talk about their loss and share their grief can be so valuable. Even if they aren't able or ready to talk yet, you have let them know you are there for them, and that is worth a lot.

It is human nature to rely on our connections with others, especially at difficult times. You could help them feel better with just a few words of care and concern.

Starting the conversation

It might take a bit of courage to start the conversation, but don't worry about saying exactly the right thing. The important thing is that you say something.

Here are some suggestions if you are finding it difficult:

- "I don't know what to say but I am so sorry to hear this news."
- "I'm so sad to hear this and I'm here if you need to talk."
- "They will be missed so much – they were so special. You are in my thoughts."
- "I feel so very shocked and saddened by this news. It is hard to believe they have gone. I am here when you need me."
- "This is so heartbreaking – I wish I could be there to give you a hug."

Keeping the conversation going

Taking some time to listen to how someone is really feeling will make that sense of connection even stronger. It may be a great comfort to them. You can't fix their pain but you can make it a little less lonely.

Some people will find it helpful to talk about what happened to their loved one. For example, explaining the events leading up to their death. Others may want to focus on what the person was like, or tell stories about them.

You could try asking about some of these, and see if you notice any area they seem more interested in.

For some people talking at all will be too hard. They may just need someone to hear them or reassure them while they cry or express confusion and anger.

Here are some questions you could ask to keep the conversation going:

- "Do you want to talk about how they died?"
- "People feel so many different emotions when they lose a loved one, how are you feeling?"
- "What do you think [the person who has died] would want to say to you right now?"
- "What is your favourite memory of [person who has died]?"
- "When was the last time you saw them?"



Pay attention to the signs

It is important to pay attention to signs that they are comfortable speaking. This may be the tone of their voice, the way they are standing or sitting (if you can see them) and how they answer each question.

Remember that there are some aspects that may be particularly difficult during this time, such as not being able to say goodbye or get together with loved ones.

If you're unsure you could ask them directly:

- "Do you feel uncomfortable talking about this right now?"
- Would you rather we had this conversation another time?"
- "Does it feel helpful to talk about this?"

Looking after yourself

Some of the suggestions we've made here might be difficult for you to do. You are probably dealing with many stressful experiences yourself and supporting someone through grief may feel like added pressure you can't deal with.

But being there for someone else can feel really good as well. One of the wonderful things about making a connection is that it works both ways.

If you do find the experience of supporting someone else difficult, here are some ways you can take care yourself too:

- Talk to someone you trust about how you felt the conversation went, and how you feel about it.
- Take some time for yourself to do something you like or which helps you feel calm, such as watching a fun tv programme or going for a walk.

More information

If you need further information or support to cope with grief and bereavement during the Covid-19 pandemic, visit the following:

- [Hospice UK's Coronavirus guidance](#)
- [Coronavirus: dealing with bereavement and grief, by Cruse Bereavement](#)
- [Supporting children through coronavirus, by Winston's Wish](#)

Or visit the Connection Coalition website at www.connectioncoalition.org.uk.

