

## Childline

Childline offer a 24 hour confidential service counselling service and will not pass on information to a child's parent or carer as they operate a code of confidentiality. In addition they provide a page for bereaved children and young people on their website which gives them the opportunity to access support, share and post messages.

## Seasons for Growth

Some schools in the Grampian area can organise and facilitate a group for bereaved children, using the Seasons for Growth model.

## Further Information

There is information on a number of websites, which you may find helpful. These include:

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

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

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

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

Grampian Child Bereavement Networks website lists books for children about bereavement.

## Grampian Child Bereavement Network

C/O MHA  
1, Alford Place  
Aberdeen AB10 1YD  
[www.gcbn.org.uk](http://www.gcbn.org.uk)

Telephone 01224 594099

*Our answering machine is available at all times.*

*The telephone is manned on a part time basis.*

Email: [gcbn@mhberdeen.org.uk](mailto:gcbn@mhberdeen.org.uk)

Website: [www.gcbn.org.uk](http://www.gcbn.org.uk)

Facebook [www.facebook.com/grampianchildbereavement](http://www.facebook.com/grampianchildbereavement)

**"Grampian Child Bereavement Network  
is a dedicated resource offering a range  
of services to support bereaved children  
and young people"**

Supported By



**mha**

Mental Health Aberdeen



Supporting Bereaved Children and  
Young People in Grampian

Information for Parents and Carers

Supporting a Teenager

This leaflet has been written to provide information and guidance for parents and carers of a young person who has been bereaved.

## Some common reactions of bereaved young people

While teenagers generally have the same level of understanding of death as adults they can find it hard to manage their emotions, at times. Below are outlined *some* of the ways in which teenagers may be affected by or react to bereavement.

Mood swings are often experienced by teenagers, but when they are trying to cope with extreme emotions following a death, these can be more frequent, extreme and difficult to understand. Anger is a normal part of grieving, but for some teenagers, this can, at times, feel overwhelming which can lead to them feeling out of control and appearing difficult to control. Some young teenagers may also demonstrate more evident or extreme risk taking behaviours following bereavement.

An increasing awareness of their own mortality can be frightening for young people. This can lead to increased anxiety and fear of death, both of their own, and that of others.

Occasionally they may become preoccupied with death focusing overly on morbid things.

Loss of appetite and over eating can also be indicators that a young person is struggling with the emotional impact of the loss of a loved one.

Avoidance can be a strategy that a young person adopts, where they try to suppress their emotions. Avoidance of talking about the person, or spending time with family members, may be ways in which the young person is trying to cope with their grief. Sleep disturbance, difficulty in getting to sleep or in staying asleep can affect bereaved teenagers; they may just want to spend long periods in bed.

Fear that their feelings and emotions are getting out of control may also be very distressing for teenagers when they have experienced a significant loss.

## What helps?

Some suggestions about what a parent or carer can do to help:

- Acknowledge that grief is normal and that everyone's loss and reaction to bereavement is personal and unique. Reassure them that their feelings and reactions are ok.
- Give the young person space, allowing them to talk at their own pace. It can be frustrating for adults who want the young person to talk about how they are feeling, but putting pressure on them can alienate them and make it difficult for them to speak when he or she is ready.
- Help the young person to find a way to channel their anger. This can be a physical method, through sports or physical activity, art, music or a focused feelings activity, making a feelings jar or just hitting a pillow or a punch bag.

- Be open with them. Young people can manage difficult information if given to them in an honest and supportive way. Whilst adults may want to protect the young person it can lead to them feeling excluded and isolated.

- Allow the young person to find some respite from the family home if they want it. The opportunity to stay with a friend or relative may give them both emotional space and normality when things are difficult.

- The young person may find it easier to talk to someone outside of their family, possibly a peer, teacher or family friend. If a close family member has died, then other family members will be grieving, and sometimes young people find it hard to share their grief in case they 'upset' other people.

- Talk about the deceased person, remind young people that learning to live without someone they love doesn't mean memories are lost.

- Support the young person to attend the funeral, thanksgiving or memorial service if they want to. Allow them to make up their own mind about what they want to attend.

- Support the young person in finding their own ways of marking the death of a loved one and remembering them, such as creating a memory box, framing a special picture or planting a tree.

## Where to seek professional support

Arranging an appointment with the GP can be the trigger for a referral to an appropriate agency. The wait for an appointment to a specialised service may take time, and it is important that you seek advice of how best to manage the young person's circumstances.

## Counselling

Some child and young people's counselling services are available within Grampian. These are specialised services and there can be a waiting list. Organisations such as CRUSE Bereavement Care Scotland, CLAN, and ACIS (Aberdeen Counselling and Information Service) accept direct referrals from families:

**CRUSE:** Telephone 0845 600 2227  
Email [aberdeen@cruseScotland.org.uk](mailto:aberdeen@cruseScotland.org.uk)

**CLAN** Telephone 01224 647000 – for enquiries  
Telephone 0800 783 7922 – for support  
Email [enquiries@clanhouse.org](mailto:enquiries@clanhouse.org)

**ACIS** Telephone 01224 573892  
Website [www.mha.uk.net/acis/](http://www.mha.uk.net/acis/)