

# Bereavement Support for adults

Supporting anybody affected by bereavement in north east Essex



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Bereavement support at St Helena



## About us

We support adults and children in north east Essex who are facing bereavement regardless of the cause of death or where their loved one has died; our bereavement support service is open to **everyone**.

Each person is affected differently by bereavement and we aim to support you by helping your life to go on in the face of bereavement.

The support we offer to you is dependent on, and tailored to, your needs, which we identify in your assessment based on the answers you give in your referral.

St Helena provides all its bereavement services free of charge, however they are not free to provide. We rely on the generosity of local people to raise the funds needed to support local people and help life to go on in the face of dying, death and bereavement.

It's always there but bereavement support really helped kick start my life around the grief. I take it with me rather than it being my entire world.

## Bereavement during the Coronavirus pandemic

During the global coronavirus pandemic, we are facing a tragic loss of life, often under very difficult circumstances including social isolation.

Because of pressures on frontline services, and restrictions on visiting to hospitals etc, we understand that the death of your loved one may feel particularly traumatic.

At St Helena, we provide bereavement support to all, no matter the cause of death.

The death of your loved one does not have to be related to coronavirus and you do not need to have had support from St Helena prior to your referral for bereavement support. If you are bereaved at this time, you can refer yourself on the following link

[sthelena.org.uk/referrals/bereavement-referrals](http://sthelena.org.uk/referrals/bereavement-referrals)

or call **01206 984 274** for further information and support.

You will find information below, that may be helpful at this time.

## Funerals

The current restrictions during the coronavirus pandemic mean many people are unable to attend funerals, cremations and wakes. This is a distressing reality for thousands of people at this time. Each month in the UK there are around 50,000 deaths, so many people, maybe like yourself, are unable to say goodbye in the way you expected. We understand that this will impact on your bereavement and that you may wish to have support to make sense of this.

### Current rules around funerals

As of 24 March 2020, in the UK, funerals can only go ahead at a crematorium or graveside. Only 'immediate family' are able to attend (many funeral directors are limiting numbers to 10) and they must abide by social distancing rules.

That means unless you are attending with the family you are isolating with, you need to stay two metres apart. We understand this will be heartbreaking – being unable even to reach out and give a loved one a hug – but it will save lives.

Anyone with Covid-19 symptoms, who is self-isolating after being exposed, or who is in a high-risk group, is not able to attend. Funerals may be shorter than normal and likely to be delayed, which for certain cultures may compound your distress.

The rules are the same whether or not the person died of coronavirus, and whether the funeral has been planned in advance or not.

### **When you cannot attend the funeral**

Even if you cannot watch in real time, or the funeral is delayed or reduced to a very short service, you can still set some time aside to have your own private goodbye or memorial at home.

It may be worth asking the next of kin if they are filming the service. If you cannot make the service you could look at pictures, play some of the person's favourite music, write a message to them, light a candle or follow any of your own cultural rituals.

You could ask those who have been able to attend the funeral to call you afterwards so you can hear their account of the event, and take the time to share your memories of the person together.

We will not be under these restrictions forever, and at some future point you may be able to hold a formal or informal memorial for your loved one.

## **Coronavirus: grieving and isolation**

We understand that bereavement 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, even if you are not able to see friends or family in person.

Self-Isolation could make feelings of loneliness and grief more intense. Your family might be isolating together, and although this may be a support, at other times tensions and resentments could be magnified making it difficult for you to help each other.

If children and teenagers are isolated it could be difficult for you to keep them occupied and deal with all of the emotions and fears in the household. The impact of dealing with a bereavement, compounded with feelings of worry about external situations can mean that feelings of grief aren't fully expressed.

Isolation can also make it harder to process grief. At times like this when there is a constant stream of new and distressing information, you could find yourself distracted from dealing with grief.

The bereavement team at St Helena will support you at this difficult time.

## How you can help yourself

Although you may not be able to see people in person, you can keep in regular contact with others using the phone, text, or internet if it is available to you.

Look after yourself and get rest. Try to get some fresh air or sunlight each day - even opening a window or door can help. You may find it helps to do some exercise around the house if you are able. Try to keep to a regular routine of getting up and dressed and eating meals at the usual time, whether you are on your own or part of a family group. At times when you have more energy, you might want to find some jobs to do around the house or garden (if you have one).

It is normal to experience feeling intense grief and then feeling able to look to the future, only to feel another wave of grief. There is no 'right' way to grieve, so do allow yourself to experience your grief and your thoughts without judgement.

Don't feel guilty if you are struggling. Reach out to others who might be finding it difficult too, you may be able to help one another.

## How you can help another person

Try to stay in contact with bereaved friends and family even if you cannot visit. Find out if they can talk on the phone, or over the internet if they have the technology available. 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.

You do not need to have the answers or to find a solution for them, just listening can be extremely helpful. Consider sending a letter, card or note to let them know you are thinking of them too.

## Coronavirus: grief and trauma

If someone dies of coronavirus or complications resulting from the virus, a number of things may be particularly hard for you.

Infection controls may mean that you did not have an opportunity to spend time with your loved one, or to say goodbye.

Depending on how the illness progressed, it could have become serious very quickly, which may have left you experiencing utter disbelief. If you were not able to be present for the death and cannot view the body of your loved one, it may be difficult to accept the reality of a bereavement.

You may have been exposed to stories in the media which highlight the traumatic nature of death in these circumstances. Or you may have witnessed distressing scenes directly. You may feel disturbed by mental images.

For most people this type of emotional processing will dissipate naturally, however in a severe form this can become Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). You can contact you GP for further information on this or follow the link to the NHS website

[nhs.uk/conditions/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/)

or the MIND website [mind.org.uk/ptsd](https://www.mind.org.uk/ptsd)

## Coping with conversations of death and dying

In a pandemic situation, there is inevitably lots of discussion of death and dying, and this can bring up difficult feelings for everyone, perhaps more so for those with anxiety and mental health issues. It can also bring up difficult feelings and memories of past bereavements. It may also bring up feelings of fear about dying yourself.

It can help to take regular breaks from the news and social media. You may want to limit yourself to a few trusted news sources and check only at certain times of the day. Think about what activities are the best distraction for you – this could be watching old films or TV series, reading, arts and crafts, yoga, mindfulness or getting on with some jobs around the house and staying in telephone contact with others.

Do remember this situation will not last.

## Bereavement support at St Helena

At St Helena we provide bereavement support to all, no matter the cause of death. Our team of bereavement counsellor's and bereavement support workers and volunteers continue to run services throughout this pandemic by supporting you over the telephone.

If you would like to make a referral please follow the link

[sthelena.org.uk/referrals/bereavement-referrals](https://sthelena.org.uk/referrals/bereavement-referrals)

or call **01206 984274** for further information and support.



# St Helena

Bereavement Support team (18+): 01206 984 274

Family Support team (for bereaved children or families): 01206 848 163

Referrals (for out of hours): 01206 890 360

The Hospice: 01206 845 566

Fundraising: 01206 931 468

All the quotations in this booklet are from people St Helena has supported.

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[sthelena.org.uk](http://sthelena.org.uk) [StHelenaHospice](https://www.facebook.com/StHelenaHospice) [@sthelenahospice](https://twitter.com/sthelenahospice)

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