

Grief and Bereavement

This guide is for students and employees at Brunel University London in response to Covid-19 and is intended to signpost people who have been bereaved or who are providing care and support to those bereaved to free, appropriate and easily accessible support.

Are you experiencing bereavement?

Bereavement, sometimes also referred to as grief, is a term used to describe the sense of loss felt when someone close to us or who we care about dies. It can be difficult and stressful and nearly everybody goes through it at some point in their lives.

This sense of loss may contain a range of emotions, such as sadness, anger, guilt, frustration and anxiety. Everyone experiences grief differently and there is no 'normal' or 'right' way to grieve. How we react will be influenced by many different things, including our age and personality, our cultural background and religious beliefs, our previous experiences of bereavement, our circumstances and how we cope with loss.

However, if you are experiencing bereavement whether directly or by caring for a bereaved person this guide is intended to help you negotiate the next steps in your journey.

Are you caring for someone who is bereaved?

If you are caring for someone who has been bereaved it is important to know how to help them as best you can, and how to look after your own well-being too.

Whether you are a family member, friend, neighbour, charity volunteer or a professional, you are undertaking an important role. The good news is that research tells us that straightforward kindness and loving behaviours at this time can be a big help to bereaved people. You do not need to be a professional or have significant training or experience to give help and support. However, this guide will include details of resources available to you should you need to seek professional support.



Covid-19 and Bereavement

The coronavirus (covid-19) global pandemic has and will continue to result in the substantial loss of life across many countries including the UK. It is anticipated that members of the Brunel University community will also be affected either directly or indirectly by the experience of loss of life. This highlights the need for support, advice and guidance available for bereaved people and those caring for them.

A bereavement from covid-19 is likely to be a very challenging kind of bereavement for most people.

In light of these potential challenges, it is really important that people bereaved by covid-19 are cared for early on. We know, from research, that early support and care for bereaved people can mean that it is easier, over time, to make a recovery with good mental health. By 'recovery' the aim is to enable the bereaved person to make the journey from grieving to remembering.

A death from covid-19 may mean that there has been or will be:

- Little time to prepare for a loved one's death following a period of illness due to covid-19
- No time spent with a loved one before they died due to the risk of infection and social distancing rules
- An inability to say goodbye after death due to restrictions around attending funerals, public gatherings and travel
- Isolation issues as people may be grieving while separated from family and friends who may also be grieving but in other locations
- Practical challenges, for example if the person bereaved was previously receiving care from someone who has died and/or they have responsibilities to care for others or have ongoing work or family responsibilities
- Issues around coping with a shocking bereavement at a time when the bereaved person, or others in their circle of family and friends, may also be ill with covid-19

We are here to support you

Brunel University is committed to providing support, advice and guidance to employees and students who are experiencing bereavement and loss.

Below you will find a range of support options for you.

It may be that you would like to make a start by speaking to someone at the university, perhaps you feel you would like to join an online support group, call a helpline or begin some bereavement counselling. This guide is here for you to explore these options in your own time so that you can decide what might be best for you.

Experiencing bereavement is often confusing and disorientating and you may experience a mixture of emotions that can be overwhelming. We may not in reality have a good sense of where to begin. If this is the case, you should contact one of the following for a preliminary conversation:

- **Students can contact the Student Support and Welfare** team who are available by Skype, phone and email to offer support and guidance on a range of personal, welfare, wellbeing and financial issues that may be impacting you. Contact studentsupport@brunel.ac.uk or call **01895 267045** to enquire about support or book an appointment.
- **Employees can contact the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)** which is free and available to all employees 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The service is currently unaffected by the impact of Covid-19 and is on hand to help with your concerns. Call **0808 168 2143** or visit www.carefirst-lifestyle.co.uk quoting 'brunel' as your username and 'employee' as your password.

Do you need urgent help?

Samaritans are available 24 hours a day if you are in distress or in need of immediate support. Free helpline: **116 123**

Worried about how grief may affect your work or studies?

Brunel University has published a new webpage intended to keep everyone updated on the evolving situation and the University's response based on the latest available information and guidance from the UK Government.

The webpage contains the latest guidance for students and employees by way of a series of FAQs relating to teaching, learning and assessments [here](#).

If, however you have a question that has not been answered on the webpage, please contact your personal tutor or taught programmes office.

The current contact information for all essential and academic services can be found [here](#).

Employees are encouraged to contact their line manager and can also access information to support them on the [Employee Reward & Wellbeing intranet page](#).



Want to speak to someone at the University?

Brunel Listening service offers a non-judgemental space for conversation where you can talk about anything that is impacting or worrying you. Sessions are held with one of our Chaplaincy Team and last for up to 30 minutes.

To book a listening session email studentsupport@brunel.ac.uk or call **01895 267045**.

The Chaplaincy Team

Our Chaplain and Interfaith Advisor Rev Dr Piotr Ashwin-Siejkowski is available to students and employees who may wish speak with him about their spiritual wellbeing.

Available online via Zoom on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

Email : Piotr.Ashwin-Siejkowski@brunel.ac.uk

Counselling and Mental Wellbeing Service for students

Counselling is a safe confidential space where you will be listened to. Feeling understood by someone who is not directly involved can help you to explore and clarify your feelings. The counsellor will not make decisions for you, nor impose opinions, but will respect your individual needs in order to help you identify your own personal resources which are sometimes lost in times of difficulty.

To book an appointment to speak with the counselling service (or a mental health adviser), please contact the student support and welfare team on **01895 267045** or send an email to studentsupport@brunel.ac.uk

There are also a variety of online resources and workshops available to support your wellbeing [here](#).

Want to try a helpline?

Sudden have experienced Bereavement Responders available to provide support and advice if someone you love has died unexpectedly and have experienced Bereavement Responders. Free helpline: **0800 121 6510** or talk to us by email at suddenhelpline@brake.org.uk

Cruse is a bereavement charity that offers telephone email and website support. Cruse has produced covid-19 specific bereavement advice which can be accessed [here](#). You can also access the Cruse national helpline, which is staffed by trained bereavement volunteers should you wish to speak with someone. Free helpline: **0808 808 1677** (Mon-Fri 9.30-5pm (excluding bank holidays), with extended hours on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings, when they're open until 8pm)

Hope Again is Cruse Bereavement Care's website for young people with information, vlogs, podcasts, videos and sharing personal stories. Free helpline: **0808 808 1677** (Mon-Fri 09:30-17:00)

The Bereavement Trust offer support and practical advice about bereavement. Free helpline **0800 435 455** (6pm to 10pm every day)

Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide offer dedicated support to meet the needs and break the isolation of those bereaved by suicide. Free helpline: **0300 111 5065** (9am to 9pm every day)

The Lullaby Trust offers support to anyone affected by the sudden and unexpected death of a baby or young child. Free helpline: **0808 802 6868** or email support@lullabytrust.org.uk (Mon-Fri 10am-5pm with extended hours on Tuesday and Thursday until 9pm. 6pm till 10pm on weekends)

Sands provide support for anyone affected by stillbirth or neonatal death. Free helpline: **0808 164 3332** (9.30am to 5.30pm Mon-Fri with extended hours on Tues and Thurs evenings until 9.30pm)

Would you like to access bereavement support online?

Sudden is a charitable initiative for suddenly bereaved people and the people caring for them as well as advice to those bereaved by COVID-19 and their carers.

Mind for Better Mental Health provides information on bereavement, where to go for support, and suggestions for helping yourself and others through grief.

NHS Choices – ‘Grief after bereavement or loss’ has information about how to cope and mental health and wellbeing. Also includes information on how access CBT based bereavement therapy.

What’s Your Grief? – offers an online supportive community, resources and discussion about grief.

The Good Grief Trust – offers support and resources by others who have been bereaved.

WAY Widowed and Young – the only national charity in the UK for people aged 50 or under when their partner has died. It’s a peer-to-peer support group.

Would you like to try support via an app?

Child Bereavement UK offer an app for 11–25-year-olds who have been bereaved of someone important to them.

Would you like to read about loss, grief and bereavement?

The Compassionate Friends have put together a reading list of helpful and supportive books [here](#).

Other suggested reads include:

The Courage to Grieve, Judy Tattelbaum

Facing Grief: Bereavement and the Young Adult, Susan Wallbank

A Special Scar: The Experience of People Bereaved by Suicide, Alison Wertheimer

Through Grief: The Bereavement Journey Elizabeth Collick, a CRUSE publication, also available as a cassette recording.

Death Of A Parent, Caroline McLoughlin, Virago, 1994

