

DERBYSHIRE ASBESTOS SUPPORT TEAM

BEREAVEMENT HANDBOOK

**Information and Support for the
Newly Bereaved**

2nd Edition

The DAST team wish to offer our sincere sympathy to you, your family and friends in your bereavement.

A personal message from our Bereavement Support Worker

Firstly I would like to offer my sincere condolences to you and your family at this difficult time.

We have written this Handbook to help and guide you, not only with the practical matters and formalities of dealing with your loss, but also to provide information, advice and support as you face a very different future in the days, weeks and months ahead.

We are fortunate in having a strong community of members of DAST and are grateful for their feedback, comments and contributions in putting this Handbook together. We hope you can take encouragement from those who seek to share their experiences in order to help those who are now facing the bewildering pain of bereavement.

If there is anything you would like to discuss, please do get in touch, for further support and assistance.

kindest regards - Jo Reeve, Bereavement Support Worker

About this booklet:

The death of a loved one is a time of grief and sorrow – this is a natural and normal part of your loss. It is, unfortunately, a period during which a number of matters must be dealt with. This can be quite bewildering and stressful and our hope is that this booklet along with the help of our Bereavement Support Team will assist you through this difficult time. The death of your loved one may

have happened suddenly or have been long expected, either way it will still be a shock to you. This booklet will provide you with help and guidance about what to do, especially in the first few difficult days of your bereavement. It also contains information about some of the emotional and physical responses you may experience and contact details of support organisations are included. We have also included a section on health and well-being, to help support you and your health in order to face the future. A bereavement can feel like the loneliest of times. So this booklet will also include anecdotes and stories from others who have been bereaved through an asbestos-related disease. May their voices and their experience bring you some comfort and hope for the future.

This booklet is divided into 5 parts and we hope that its contents will help you:

1. **Part one** gives you immediate things you need to know and understand and covers all the practical matters that need dealing with. It will tell you about the role of the Coroners Office and Registry Office. We will also tell you who needs to be informed and information regarding probate and financial matters.
2. **Part two** is about grief and aims to help you to understand your feelings. It also gives you information about what help there is available.
3. **Part three** is all about health and wellbeing, about looking after yourself when you may not always feel like it.
4. **Part four** is about discovering the person you are now and looking towards the future. It has information to help and

encourage you, and poems and stories from others who have been bereaved.

5. **Part five** is a directory of useful resources, contact numbers and support organisations

Grief affects us all in different ways. Everyone's experience of losing a loved one is different and each journey will be unique.

Contents - Part 1 - Practical Matters:

Registering the death.....	7
Coroner's Office.....	8
Tell Us Once Service.....	9
Checklist of people you will need to notify.....	10
Funeral Arrangements.....	12
Do I need Probate?.....	16
Financial Matters including benefits & compensation.....	18
Online and digital legacy.....	21

Part 2 - Understanding Grief

Understanding Grief.....	22
How might you feel?.....	27
Physical Symptoms.....	28
Complicated Grief.....	30
Talking Therapies.....	31

Men and Grief34

Part 3 - Health & Wellbeing

How Are You? - I'm Fine!.....39

Sleep.....40

Eating Well.....42

Exercise.....47

Spirituality.....56

Mindfulness.....57

Journaling.....61

Part 4 - Becoming Me

Rediscovering the new you.....65

Being Safe.....68

Staying Connected.....74

Poems and Stories of Loss and Hope.....79

How DAST can help.....89

Part 5 - Directory of Useful Organisations and Support.....93





Part One:

Practical Matters

AN OVERVIEW OF WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

To help you through this process, the diagram below gives you an easy to read overview at a glance. This guide is arranged in chronological order considering the order in which arrangements are usually made to assist and guide you.

Medical Certificate of Cause of Death

- Death at hospital • Death at home • Coroners Office

Register the Death

- Who can register a death? • How long do I have to do this? • Where do I do this? • How do I do this? • What do I need to take with me? • What will I receive?

Locate Papers

- Financial • Legal, including the Will • HMRC

Arrange the Funeral

- Payment • Arrangements

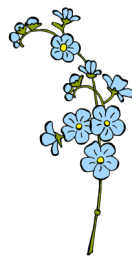
Informing others

- Who to tell!

Probate

- What options do I have? • Who is responsible? • What is involved? • What help might I need?

Registering the Death



We understand that the death of a close family member or friend will be an emotionally difficult and distressing time for you. This is normal and natural. However, until we find ourselves responsible for making the funeral arrangements, or helping someone to do this, it can be difficult working out what to do and in what order, and we often do not realise how many practical tasks there are to consider when someone dies.

This guide aims to provide you with easy to understand, practical advice to help you with all aspects of your loved one's estate.

You will need a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) to be able to register the death, unless a coroner is involved in which case the process is slightly different.

If the deceased died in hospital, the staff will arrange for a doctor to issue a MCCD that will specify the time, date and cause of death. You may be given an appointment to collect the MCCD if the required doctor is not on duty at the time of death. This may be inconvenient, but the doctor who needs to complete the MCCD may not be on duty, or may be tied up elsewhere.

If the death was at home or in a care/nursing home it will usually be a GP who issues the MCCD . The doctor will usually give you information about how to register the death. In England the death should be registered within 5 days (unless the Coroner is involved). You should contact a register office in the area where your loved one has died. A relative should register the death, but if this is not possible it can be registered by someone who was present at the

time of death, an administrator from the hospital, if the death was in hospital, or you are the person in charge of making funeral arrangements. The register office will advise you of what documentation you need.

When you register a death you'll get:

- a Certificate for Burial or Cremation (the 'green form') - gives permission for burial or an application for cremation
- a Certificate of Registration of Death (form BD8) - you may need to fill this in and return it if the person was getting a State Pension or benefits (the form will come with a pre-paid envelope so you know where to send it)

You can buy extra death certificates - it is helpful to think about how many copies of the death certificate you might need, these will be needed for sorting out the person's affairs. You can buy certified copies for a small charge at the time of registration. These are original, certified copies and not photocopies. You can also buy certified copies at a later time, but they may cost more.

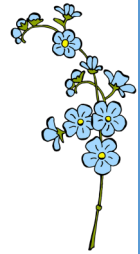
When would a Coroner be involved and why?

There are a number of reasons why a death may be reported to the coroner:-

- The cause of death is unknown or uncertain
- The death was sudden or unexpected
- The death was caused by an industrial disease, an accident or unusual circumstances.

It is a legal requirement in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland

that the cause of death is known, and is recorded on the Medical Certificate. The coroner is a doctor or lawyer responsible for investigating the cause of some deaths. A death may be reported to the coroner either by the doctor or the registrar of deaths.



In this event the coroner's office or their representative will contact you directly. (The representative may be a police officer, even if the reason for the coroner's involvement is related to an industrial disease). They will explain the reason for their involvement and the registration procedures that will be required.

If the cause of death remains uncertified or if it is determined that the death was not from natural causes, a post-mortem will be held. This is an internal and external examination of the deceased.

Please let the Coroner's office know if you object to a post-mortem for any reason, however please be aware that it may be a legal requirement, in which case you cannot object.

If you are pursuing a civil claim for compensation your solicitor may request a post mortem as this can support your claim

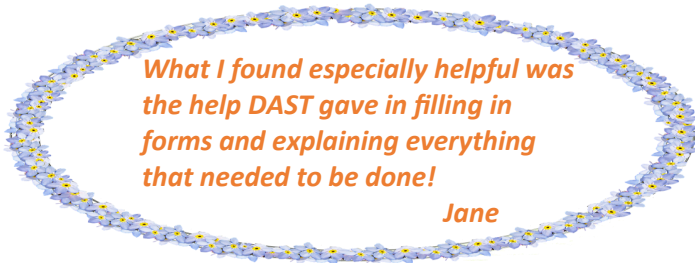
In cases where a death is reported to the Coroner, all necessary papers will be issued by the Coroner once investigations are complete.

Tell Us Once Service

Tell Us Once is a service available in some local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales. It allows you to report a death to most government organisations at the same time. The local registrar will tell you if the Tell Us Once service is available in your

area and how to use it. They will give you a unique reference number to access the service. You can find more information about the Tell Us Once service at:

[gov.uk/after-a-death/organisations-you-need-to-contact-and-tell-us-once](https://www.gov.uk/after-a-death/organisations-you-need-to-contact-and-tell-us-once)



Checklist of people you will need to notify

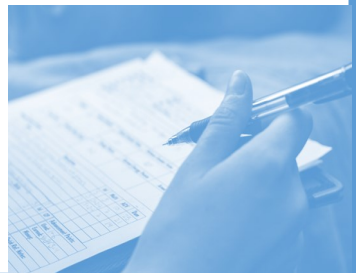
A large number of people and organisations need to be informed when someone has died. The checklist below may help you with this and whilst it may look daunting not all will be relevant to your situation. This can help avoid the distress of letters and phone calls continuing in the weeks and months ahead. A trusted family member or friend could help you with this.

- To report a death to Social Security office to cancel payments eg. Pensions & benefits contact the Bereavement Service on 0800 731 0469
- Home help organiser, district nurse, day care centre etc.
- Local Authority - Council Tax
- Landlord (if rented accommodation)
- Solicitor
- Bank / Post Office
- Building society / Credit Union

- Credit card company**
- Insurance and / or pension company and /or financial advisor**
- Inland Revenue**
- NS&I - Premium Bonds. Growth bonds, Savings**
- Investment and Share Companies**
- Mortgage company**
- Employer and trade union**
- Car insurance company - if you are insured to drive the car under the deceased's name - you will cease to be insured**
- Any hospital the person was attending**
- Household Utilities (Gas, Electricity, Water)**
- DVLA—Vehicle Licensing**
- Telephone company, landline and mobile**
- TV Licensing**
- To stop direct mail go to The Bereavement Register:
www.the-bereavement-register.org.uk.**
- Subscriptions to clubs/associations/magazines**

This is not an exhaustive list and many of these may not be relevant to your circumstances.

It may be helpful if you keep a list of everyone you contact with the name of the person you spoke to and any further action you need to take.



Funeral Arrangements

Funerals and memorial services allow relatives and friends to get together to remember the person who has died. They can be a celebration of the person's life as well as a chance to say goodbye to them.

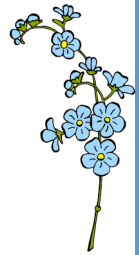
You can plan a funeral yourself, but most people prefer to use a funeral director. The deceased may have left a written record, told family and friends about their funeral wishes or have a pre-paid funeral plan in place. It is advisable to check prior to arranging the funeral. Funeral wishes could also have been specified as part of their Will, and so it is important to find their last Will before arrangements are put in place for a funeral. It may be that what has previously been expressed as the deceased's wishes, differ from those written in an updated Will. It may also be that certain wishes did not want to be discussed for personal reasons. It is therefore very important the last Will is located. Most families choose to hand arrangements over to a professional Funeral Director who will be able to offer advice and help. Don't be afraid to shop around and ask for a detailed breakdown of costs, as funeral fees can vary considerably. Family and friends may also be able to offer recommendations. When looking for a Funeral Director, it is a good idea to ensure they are members of a trade association, most commonly the National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD).

If specific requests are unknown, a range of decisions will need to be made. We have provided some guidance questions you may wish to use as a starting point to think about.

Guidance Questions: Things to think about for the funeral

- ◆ Do you want to spend time with your loved one at the Funeral Director's Chapel of Rest, or perhaps bring them home before the funeral? Is the coffin to be open or closed?
- ◆ Will a burial or cremation be taking place, if this is not predetermined by your religion or culture? This decision will help to determine where the funeral will take place.

- ◆ Do you want a private burial or cremation followed by a thanksgiving/memorial event?
- ◆ What style of funeral is required - religious, a civil funeral, or a funeral with no religious content?
- ◆ The funeral director will be able to advise you of religious ministers and Celebrants who can take the funeral.
- ◆ You may wish to place an announcement of the death and funeral plans in a national or local newspaper (if so we advise not to include the home address of the deceased).
- ◆ What type of coffin would you prefer? There is a huge range available from traditional solid wood, wicker, or maybe cardboard decorated with artwork using a picture or photo of your own choice.
- ◆ If you are arranging a cremation there are many choices available for what you want to do with the ashes (cremated remains). There is also a wide variety and style of urns that can be used to store the ashes, if this is what you wish to do. The ashes can be stored at the crematorium or funeral directors premises, as well as at home.
- ◆ Your ideas about the style of the funeral will influence other content such as ideas about music and readings.
- ◆ You will need to decide who will carry the coffin during the funeral service. This may include family and/or friends of the deceased, otherwise the funeral director will be able to provide bearers to carry your loved ones coffin. This may seem daunting for those who have never done so before, so it is a good idea for those chosen to speak to the funeral director before the day of the funeral on what to do when performing this duty, and provide the reassurance and confidence to ensure that everything runs smoothly.
- ◆ Do you want a funeral cortege (i.e. the hearse and any following cars) to leave from a family home, or will people



assemble at the place of the ceremony?

- ◆ You may wish to produce an order of service. This can include a photograph of the deceased, with a few words about them. Your funeral director should be able to help you produce this and they should be able to show you a few samples to help you decide on the design and layout.
- ◆ A book of condolences can provide great comfort to the deceased's family and friends after the funeral ceremony. This is usually set up on a table in the foyer/entrance to the venue. You may also like a larger photograph of the deceased on display alongside the book, with some candles.
- ◆ Many funerals include a gathering of mourners after the ceremony with refreshments served. The venue might be your own home, a church hall, a pub or a more formal setting such as a hotel. You will want to think about your budget, and how many people may attend to help make this decision. Legally most of the expenses associated with the funeral can be claimed from the deceased's estate; however the gathering of mourners is not usually covered, as it is not considered an essential cost.
- ◆ You can take time to decide on the design of the headstone for a grave (and also to save up for it), or you may want to consider an alternative memorial, such as a bench or a tree.

The number of decisions to be made for the funeral can seem daunting. Unless you have to arrange a funeral quickly, for whatever reason, you can take your time, talk with family members and close friends, or ask as many questions of your funeral director as you need to.

Direct Cremation - In recent years, Direct Cremation has become more popular. Direct cremation is a simple cremation with no funeral ceremony and no mourners in attendance. The deceased is simply taken straight to the crematorium, where the cremation takes place. Typically 60% cheaper than a traditional funeral, a direct funeral offers a low-cost alternative to those looking to save

money and say good bye 'their way'. However, families can choose to attend the committal if they wish.



How Direct Cremation works:

- Your loved one is collected by the simple cremation funeral provider and cared for until the time of the cremation
- They complete the documentation required and provide guidance for the family
- The deceased is placed in a simple coffin and transported to the crematorium
- The crematorium, date and time of the cremation are usually chosen by the service provider
- The ashes are returned to family or scattered in the garden of remembrance

Is Direct Cremation a good idea?

Direct cremation could be a good idea if you want to save money on funeral costs and avoid the formality of a funeral service at the crematorium. However, a direct cremation may not be a good idea if your family aren't happy with the prospect of such a simple cremation.

Paying for the funeral - If you are arranging your relative or friend's funeral, you will be responsible for organising payment of funeral costs. Your relative or friend may have had a pre-paid funeral plan or an insurance policy that covers the cost of their funeral. Or if they have left money, this can be used to pay for the funeral. Sometimes, banks and building societies will allow you to use money to pay for the funeral before probate is granted. But they do not have to do this. You may have to pay the funeral costs while you are waiting for probate.

The Social Fund is a government fund that makes payments to people in need. To be eligible for most Social Fund payments, you need to be receiving certain benefits when you apply. These

payments include a Funeral Payment to help with the cost of arranging a funeral. It will not cover the cost of the whole funeral bill. You may have to pay the government back from any money you get from the person's estate, such as their savings. The fund is run by the Department for Work and Pensions. For more information about the Social Fund please contact us at DAST.

The days and weeks after the funeral can be very difficult. After being busy organising the funeral, it can feel very quiet. It is a good idea to try not to do too much too soon. It is important to take time to look after yourself. You will need time to get used to your loved one not being there and the changes this brings. You may feel very emotional at this time. Some people may try to keep busy to avoid their feelings. But you should not be afraid to show your emotions. It is natural to feel sad or cry when you are thinking about your relative or friend. We have more information about feelings and how to cope with them and looking after yourself in Part 3 of this booklet.

Finding out about Probate

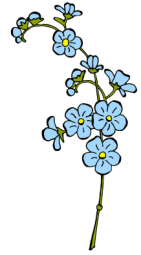
Dealing with a loved one's estate can be a difficult task as there are many factors which could complicate matters.

Have you thought about...

- ◆ Closing bank accounts and paying debts?
- ◆ Dealing with shares and investments?
- ◆ Redirecting post?
- ◆ Dealing with business assets?
- ◆ Insurance for an unoccupied property?
- ◆ House clearance and sale of high value belongings?
- ◆ Selling the house?
- ◆ Any specialist legal work?
- ◆ Inheritance Tax and Income Tax forms?

This whole process is called Estate Administration and part of the process may involve having to apply for a Grant of Representation.

A Grant of Representation is a legal document issued by the courts that proves you have the authority to administer the estate. It is often referred to as obtaining 'Probate'.



Do I need probate?

This is dependent on the value of the estate. An asset holder (e.g a bank) can insist that a grant be obtained for any amount over £5,000, although most have a higher threshold. This is the legal procedure, not one dictated by an asset holder, and is in place to ensure that the wishes of the deceased are adhered to, creditors are paid, and those named as beneficiaries receive what they are entitled to.

What is involved?

A Grant of Probate is a court order that allows the executor of a Will, or their professional representative to deal with the property and financial affairs of the deceased. However the term 'probate' is most often used to describe the whole process of discovering what someone has left, going through the legal process of gaining authority to deal with it (whether there is a Will or not), paying off any debts and finally distributing the remainder to the people entitled to receive it. This is the administration of the estate, which can take several months on average, but may take longer depending on the complexity of the estate, and whether a property is involved.

There are three main stages in the process:

- ◆ Collecting the information about all of the assets and debts of the deceased;
- ◆ Preparing the statutory Tax Returns and the application to the Probate Registry for the legal authority to administer the estate (the Grant of Probate);
- ◆ Gathering in the assets, paying debts and expenses, and distributing the estate to beneficiaries.

Many people choose to employ a professional to take on all or some of the legal responsibilities on their behalf. However, you do

not have to appoint a professional; some people choose to deal with the estate administration themselves. It is important to make an honest appraisal of your time limits and ability to take on a task that can be complex and very time consuming. More information and guidance can be found on the gov.uk website:

<https://www.gov.uk/applying-for-probate/apply-for-probate>

Our Bereavement Support Worker can also assist you if you choose to do this yourself. Once all the financial information has been gathered together there are two sets of forms to complete - HMRC forms and Probate application form.

If you do consult a professional legal firm, expect a clear and straightforward price based on the amount of work involved. Some firms may offer a price based on a percentage of the estate value or hourly rates. If you are comparing quotes make sure they are like for like.

Who is responsible?

The Personal Representatives – Executors (named in the Will) or Administrators (the next of kin where there is no Will) - are personally, legally and financially responsible for administering the estate. They are accountable to HM Revenue and Customs and the beneficiaries.

Financial Matters

DWP Benefits

A change of circumstances, especially the death of a partner, can change what you may be entitled to in terms of benefits. Income may fall due to a lost pension fund or wage, or may increase due to an inheritance, and therefore take you over the threshold for some benefits, or may result in paying tax.

The old system of bereavement benefits, including Bereavement Payment, Bereavement Allowance and Widowed Parent's Allowance, changed to a new single Bereavement Support Payment

introduced for new claims from April 2017.



This new system focusses support on the 18 month period immediately following the bereavement with an aim to cover the additional costs of bereavement.

Claimants will now receive a lump sum of £3,500 for people with children or £2,500 for those without.

Recipients with children can receive an initial larger payment of £3,500 and up to 18 subsequent monthly payments of £350, and those without children can receive an initial payment of £2,500 and up to 18 monthly instalments of £100.

The payments will be available to anyone up until their state pension age, they do not count towards means-tested benefits and are tax free. You must claim within 3 months of your husband, wife or civil partner's death to get the full amount. You can claim up to 21 months after but your payments will be less.

You may also be entitled to extra pension payments from their pension or National Insurance contributions. You do not have to apply for this, once the Pension Service is aware of your partner's death they will assess your own pension to see if you can inherit any or your partner's.

Funeral Expenses Payment

You could get a Funeral Expenses Payment (also called a Funeral Payment) if you get certain benefits and need help to pay for a funeral you're arranging. A claim must be made within 3 months. You need to be getting an income-based benefit already or be claiming for one, to qualify in addition to the person who has died not leaving enough money to pay for their funeral.

If you live in England, Scotland, or Wales, you can find out more at: gov.uk/browse/benefits/bereavement or call us at DAST and we will be happy to help.

If someone died of an asbestos related disease without having

claimed Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (IIDB), a spouse or dependent may claim this posthumously. They may also be able to claim the government lump sum compensation. In some cases, it may also be possible to instigate a Civil Compensation claim with the help of a firm of solicitors.

Here at DAST we can provide advice on all DWP benefits and determine if there is any eligibility for you, and assist in completing all the relevant claim forms. We also have a panel of specialist solicitors who can advise if a civil claim is viable.

Tax after death

There are three main taxes that you may have to deal with when someone close to you dies:

- ◆ Inheritance tax
- ◆ Income tax
- ◆ Capital gains tax (CGT)

Inheritance Tax

This is a tax on someone's assets when they die. Currently the value above which inheritance tax is payable is £325,000. Everything over that amount will be subject to a tax of 40%. A higher allowance may be available if the deceased was a widow or widower.

The persons' assets may include:

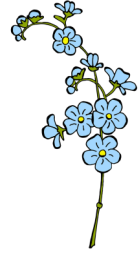
- ◆ Property
- ◆ Pensions
- ◆ Investments
- ◆ Insurance policies
- ◆ Individual items such as cars, jewellery, paintings
- ◆ Gifts that the person made but were benefiting from, for example if they had given their property to someone else but were still resident there
- ◆ Gifts that they had made in the last seven years

- ◆ Assets held in trust that generated an income

Income Tax

Some income is taxable above a certain level. The following could be subject to income tax:

- ◆ Earnings from employment or self-employment
- ◆ Pensions - state, company and personal
- ◆ Interest on savings
- ◆ Income from shares (dividends)
- ◆ Rental income
- ◆ Income paid to you from a trust



Capital Gains Tax (CGT)

The estate of the person who died may be liable to CGT on things they owned that they sold, gave away or transferred wherever in the world they were located. CGT is a tax on the profits or gains that they made on the disposal of these assets.

There are various tax forms to complete for each of the above, differing in complexity depending on the person's financial situation. If it is likely that tax will be payable we recommend getting professional help with the estate.

Online and digital legacy

Over the last fifteen years the internet has changed the ways in which we interact and communicate with one another. A digital legacy is the digital information that is available about someone following their death. Someone's digital legacy is often formed by information that they leave online. This may include any website or blog listings about the person, their social media profiles, photos, videos, gaming profiles and interactions they have had online. Your loved one may have had a Facebook or other social media account. When someone dies, it is possible to convert some of these accounts into memorialised



accounts. This allows you and other family members and friends to share memories. You can get information about these accounts from most social media websites. You can also create a new group on a social media site, where you and other people can share memories of your relative or friend. You can find information online about closing or deactivating accounts or making memorialised accounts on social media websites. You can find out more information about Digital legacies from :

<https://digitallegacyassociation.org/>

“I wish, as a carer I could have had this support and knowledge about coroners, funerals, benefits, dealing with solicitors and the inevitable paperwork, prior to his death “



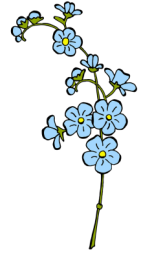
Part Two: Understanding Grief

Experiencing the loss of someone close to us through death is an inevitable part of life but that does not make it any easier when we experience it, even if the death was expected. Adjusting to life without the person who has died takes time, usually more time than we realise but eventually most people are able to make these adjustments and look forwards.

Coping with a bereavement is a very personal journey, there is no road map and it can take some time. The emotions you may experience can feel overwhelming at times, but, even though it might not feel like it now, things do get easier. We hope that this booklet can explain how you might be feeling, why you might be feeling this way and some of the things that could help you now and in the future.

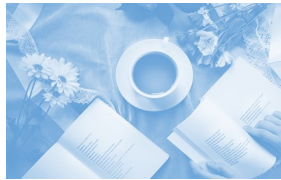
Kim’s husband died 5 years ago and she shares these thoughts on her five year journey, in the hope that they may be of some comfort and support to others.

5 year journey so far, how have I got this far?



- ◆ One step at a time, initially they are imposed, later they become a choice
- ◆ Initially it's legalities, funeral, sorting bank account etc.
- ◆ The next steps, where? how?
- ◆ Only choose to take a step forward when you feel ready, no pressure from others or what you think others might think!
- ◆ Learnt not to worry if I feel I'm sinking, it's all part of the grief process
- ◆ It's not a backward step it's natural
- ◆ Meeting others who understand has been important
- ◆ Through DAST the asbestos story is understood & there isn't a need to keep explaining to others
- ◆ The grief journey is so individual comparing one journey to another is difficult & not always helpful
- ◆ We are all on the same journey but wearing different shoes
- ◆ Importance of resting & feeling the grief pain
- ◆ I read 'The Grief Survival Guide' by Jeff Brazier at the right moment for me
- ◆ Many things in the book 'hit home', things that I was feeling but didn't know how to express
- ◆ Song: The One Voice Children's Choir - Memories (beautiful, simple & says it all)
- ◆ Grief is not a sequential process with stages it's a continuous tangle of emotions
- ◆ A bereaved friend of mine had come to realise there are 3 losses, I think this is critical in understanding what is happening

- ◆ **The loss of your partner; the loss of the life with your partner and the loss of yourself & your identity**
- ◆ **The third loss is probably the hardest for those around us to understand**
- ◆ **I'm still grappling with all 3 losses**
- ◆ **I know I've healed somewhat because I didn't want to think back to the beginning of my journey**
- ◆ **What's the next step?**
- ◆ **Often a cup of tea!**

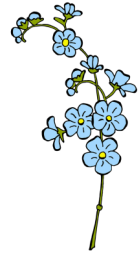


Grief is the often conflicting, and sometimes overwhelming, mixture of emotions you experience when someone close to you dies. Understanding these emotions can be difficult, but it's important to accept them and be reassured by the fact that there's no right or wrong way to feel. Grief is natural and can last a long time.

Though everyone grieves, everyone will do so in their own way. Grief is as individual as your fingerprint! How you feel can be influenced by a number of things such as

- ◆ **your personality**
- ◆ **your relationship with the person who's died**
- ◆ **your religious beliefs and cultural background**
- ◆ **whether their death was expected**
- ◆ **how they died**
- ◆ **any previous experience of death you have had.**

THERE IS NO RIGHT OR WRONG WAY TO FEEL



Some people describe being overcome or frightened by their feelings. Others say they feel numb or cannot believe what has happened. The thoughts and feelings you have will vary. Sometimes they may be very intense and stop you doing things. At other times they may be in the background and you can still do your day-to-day activities. Your feelings may change from day to day or even hour to hour. You may have the feelings soon after the person has died, and for some weeks or months afterwards. One day you may feel you are coping, but the next day you may be overcome by sadness or loneliness. It is quite normal to have ups and downs like this. If you had a difficult relationship with the person who has died, you may not feel any of the emotions we describe here. Or you may be surprised at how strong your feelings are.

Research has suggested that, in some people, grief comes in stages or as a cycle. The grief cycle as a whole is sometimes referred to as 'mourning' and describes how people adapt following a loss.

Different studies describe the stages of the grief cycle in slightly different ways, but the most common stages are:

- ◆ Denial - feelings of shock, disbelief, panic or confusion are common here. "How could this happen?", "It can't be true".
- ◆ Anger - blaming yourself, blaming others and hostility are all common feelings and behaviours - "Why me?", "This isn't fair", "I don't deserve this".
- ◆ Depression - feeling tired, hopeless, helpless, like you have lost perspective, isolated or needing to be around others - "Everything is a struggle", "What's the point?".
- ◆ Bargaining - feelings of guilt often accompany questions like "If only I had done more", "If I had only been...".
- ◆ Acceptance - acceptance does not mean that somebody likes the situation or that it is right or fair, but rather it involves acknowledging the implications of the loss and the new

circumstances, and being prepared to move forward in a new direction.

These stages do not always appear in the same order for everybody, and some people experience some stages and not others. It is common to move forwards and backwards through the stages in your own way and at your own pace. Some people may experience grief outside of the cycle altogether.

Here are some quotes from people's experience of grief:

"No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear. I am not afraid, but the sensation is like being afraid. The same fluttering in the stomach, the same restlessness, the yawning. I keep on swallowing."

— C.S. Lewis, A Grief Observed

"Grief is like the ocean; it comes on waves ebbing and flowing. Sometimes the water is calm, and sometimes it is overwhelming. All we can do is learn to swim."

— Vicki Harrison

"The reality is that you will grieve forever. You will not 'get over' the loss of a loved one; you will learn to live with it. You will heal and you will rebuild yourself around the loss you have suffered. You will be whole again but you will never be the same. Nor should you be the same nor would you want to."

— Elizabeth Kubler-Ross and David Kessler

Anne's husband Peter died in June 2020. The death of a partner is hard at any time, but usually we have coping mechanisms - family, friends, activities, a hug when needed, a shoulder to cry on, excursions to stop us brooding and while away some time. For those bereaved during the Covid pandemic, their experience can be much harder:

Initially I was in denial when Pete died we had been together for 54 years 52 of them married I thought that he had just gone away and would be coming back. Then his ashes came back, he had opted for Direct Cremation no fuss or bother and I stood there with a box with what remained of him and then I knew it was final.

He now resides in a beautiful blue and silver urn. Blue clouds for the sky opposite his picture, there aren't many pictures of him as he hated his picture taken and would always pull funny faces.

Seven months on, I'm gradually taking my life back despite Covid. Pete had said to me that he did not want me to sit alone in this house and to go out and do things but Covid has stopped this. Christmas was bad, cried all the way through it. I felt as if I was in a downward spiral, then I got counselling the counsellor was good, did not say much, let me talk most of the time and I think it helped.

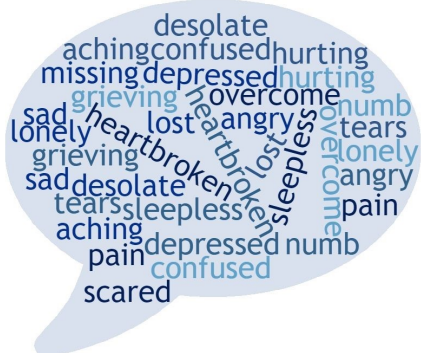
I am a lot calmer now and beginning to do things. I went through a stage of not doing anything there is only so much TV you can watch. I have started to cook again, I was always cooking when Pete was alive, he hated mass produced food. Also I have started to do my craft again - I have a craft cupboard full of paper pens stamps and punches also a few colouring books, also taking up knitting again although a novice at this.

I know there will be bumps along the road and I hope that I will ride these out with my friends via Zoom, Facebook and telephone, I know now, that it is OK NOT TO BE OK .

“It's OK not to be OK”, is something that many people who have been bereaved come to realise and releases them from the false premises and pressures that they have to feel a certain way in a certain timescale. It is certainly something that they have come to realise and wish to share with those newly embarking on this journey.

How might you feel?

Grief is not just one feeling, but many emotions that follow on from one another. You may find your mood changes quickly, or that you feel very differently in different situations. People who are bereaved sometimes say they feel 'up and down'. You may feel:



- ◆ shocked or numb
- ◆ sad
- ◆ anxious or agitated
- ◆ exhausted
- ◆ relieved
- ◆ guilty
- ◆ angry
- ◆ calm
- ◆ lacking in purpose
- ◆ resentful.

You might also find it difficult to concentrate on, or carry out tasks that would normally be easy.

There's no right or wrong way to feel and no timetable for grief. Everyone is different.

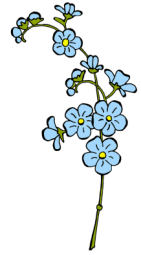
It's common for people to swing between feeling OK one minute and upset the next. You might find that these feelings come in waves or bursts – this can be unpredictable and might make you feel worried, ashamed or afraid. Remember - Its OK not to feel OK!

People sometimes ask how long they will grieve for. There's no good answer to this as it will be different for each person. You may have different feelings that come and go over months or years. Gradually, people find that their feelings of grief aren't there all the time and aren't as difficult to cope with. At times, these feelings might still be stronger – for example, at anniversaries, birthdays or in certain places.

People don't always grieve in the same way – not everyone will cry or feel sad. Some people might feel shocked or numb, especially in the first days or weeks.

For others, the death of a close friend or family member is a relief. For example, if you had a complicated relationship with the person or they were in pain or suffering. If that's how you feel, it's OK.

If you're feeling upset, but a close family member seems unaffected, it might be easy to think they 'don't care'. But grief is different for everyone, and people process it in different ways.



Physical Symptoms of Grief

It's surprising how physical grief can be. Your heart literally aches. A memory comes up that causes your stomach to clench or a chill to run down your spine. Some nights, your mind races, and your heart races along with it, your body so charged with feelings that you can barely sleep. Other nights, you're so tired that you fall asleep right away. You wake up the next morning still feeling exhausted and spend most of the day in bed.

Common physical symptoms:

Here are some of things you might experience:

- ◆ a hollow feeling in your stomach
- ◆ tightness in your chest or throat
- ◆ oversensitivity to noise
- ◆ difficulty breathing
- ◆ feeling very tired and weak
- ◆ a lack of energy
- ◆ dry mouth
- ◆ an increase or decrease in appetite
- ◆ finding it hard to sleep or fear of sleeping
- ◆ aches and pains.

Some people worry that these symptoms are a sign that they are seriously ill. Whether your symptoms are caused by a physical problem or by grief, they are still real. It's important to get support.

A range of studies reveal the powerful effects grief can have on the body. Grief increases inflammation, which can worsen health

problems you already have and cause new ones. It batters the immune system, leaving you depleted and vulnerable to infection. The heartbreak of grief can increase blood pressure and the risk of blood clots. Intense grief can alter the heart muscle so much that it causes "broken heart syndrome," a form of heart disease with the same symptoms as a heart attack.

Stress links the emotional and physical aspects of grief. The systems in the body that process physical and emotional stress overlap, and emotional stress can activate the nervous system as easily as physical threats can. When stress becomes chronic, increased adrenaline and blood pressure can contribute to chronic medical conditions.

Research shows that emotional pain activates the same regions of the brain as physical pain.

Complicated Grief

Depression is not a normal part of grief, but a complication of it. Depression raises the risk of grief-related health complications and often requires treatment to resolve, so it's important to know how to recognize its symptoms. You can distinguish normal grief from depression by looking for specific emotional patterns.

In normal grief, the sad thoughts and feelings typically occur in waves or bursts followed by periods of respite, as opposed to the more persistent low mood and agony of a depressive disorder. Normally these feelings gradually begin to ease over time and some find it possible to accept the bereavement and move forward.

People usually retain self-esteem, a sense of humour, and the capacity to be consoled or distracted from the pain, in normal grief, while people who are depressed struggle with feelings of guilt and worthlessness and a limited ability to feel or anticipate any pleasure or joy.

Some people find the feelings of loss do not improve over time and they become debilitating. This is known as complicated grief where painful emotions are long lasting, intense and all consuming.

people may find that they are unable to move through any of the stages when more than a year after the passing of their loved one. This may indicate that they have complicated grief.

If you feel that you may be experiencing complicated grief you may benefit from some extra support such as Talking Therapies. It may be a good time to book an appointment with your general practitioner (GP) and discuss these feelings with them.

Talking Therapies

Back in 2009 you couldn't switch on the TV without seeing one of the most famous and successful advertising campaigns with Bob Hoskins as the front piece - It's good to talk! Not only was this an immensely successful campaign for BT, it is also a truth for many people.

Talking to a good friend, family member, in a support group or to a trained professional - the experience of many others who have been bereaved bears testimony to the powerful benefits of talking about how you are feeling.

Sometimes, when people are struggling in their grief they may be signposted to 'Talking Therapies' by your GP but what exactly are they?

Talking therapies are just as the term suggests - therapy through talking. It is a form of treatment for mental health and emotional difficulties such as stress, anxiety and depression.

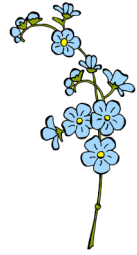
There are a number of different types of Talking Therapies and they involve working with a trained specialist. This can take place:

- ◆ One to one
- ◆ In a group
- ◆ Face to face
- ◆ By telephone
- ◆ Online (Such as Zoom)

The role of the therapist is not to give you answers to your

difficulties, but rather to help you to find your own answers.

There is no 'one size fits all' when it comes to Talking Therapies - you may find different types suit you better than others. And sometimes it might just not be the right time for you. So if you have had one type of Talking Therapy in the past and did not find it helpful, don't be put off, it is worth trying again.



Talking Therapies can help all sorts of people in lots of different situations. They are for anyone who's going through a bad time or has emotional problems they need help with and it may be the same or more effective than medication. Or you may find that your GP suggests some form of talking therapy in conjunction with medication.

You will often hear of different types of therapy described, depending on what type of training your therapist has had. This can sometimes be rather confusing. Some different types you may hear mentioned are:

- ◆ Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) - this will help you to explore and change how you think about your life and any unhelpful patterns of behaviour you have.
- ◆ Person Centred Counselling - this will help you to explore your strengths and insights about yourself to work towards personal growth.
- ◆ Humanistic - this is the focus on you as a whole person, looking at your mind, body, spirit and soul.
- ◆ Psychodynamic - this helps you explore how your unconscious thoughts may be affecting the way you behave.
- ◆ Attachment Theory - this helps you to explore your past and present relationships with family and friends and how these impact your behaviour.
- ◆ Integrative - this is a combination of different types of therapy.

If you feel you may benefit from talking to a trained professional, speak to your GP or take a look at our resource directory.

Men and grief

Though I dislike gender stereo-types and generalisations, experience and research suggests that, as a group, men tend to be less expressive of their feelings - with the possible exception of anger. There is evidence that men are more likely than women to remain silent or grieve in isolation, engage in action-oriented forms of grief expression, or lose themselves in distractions such as work or throwing themselves into a new relationship. Some studies suggest that men are more likely to use the strategies of avoidance, intellectualisation, and minimisation when grieving

Is there really a difference in the way men grieve and respond to loss? I've known plenty of men who fit the stereotype: emotionally controlled, disinclined to talk about matters of the heart, as apt to seek out solitude as connection, focusing on action rather than talk. But these were the surface responses of men whose inward experiences were far more nuanced, changeable, and multidimensional than stereotypes can capture or assess. The real picture was more complex.

Men are supposed to be strong. That's what society has told us for generations. Even as society's expectations have gradually changed, many men still try to remain stoic even when they experience a deep, personal loss. Understanding how men grieve can help men understand their own emotions and help those who love them to provide the support they need in a difficult time. Thankfully society is changing and hopefully men will begin to find it easier to express their grief in healthy ways and reach out for

support.

Grief is a unique experience. It is unique to each individual. When we think of grieving, most of us consider sadness and crying to be typical. But there are many symptoms of grief. For men used to hiding tears, other symptoms can be more common. These include:

- **Withdrawal** – Many men will withdraw from family and friends, both physically and emotionally, when they are grieving.
- **Irritability** – Men who have experienced a loss may be more easily irritated by small annoyances.
- **Anger** – Men who are in mourning can experience anger at those they perceive as responsible for their loved one's death, at themselves, or even at nothing in particular. They can overreact and explode over small issues that usually wouldn't bother them.
- **Persistent Thoughts of Death** – This includes thinking about the loss of their loved one, the final moments of their death or death in general.
- **Substance Abuse** – Men who are mourning may attempt to mask their pain with alcohol or drugs.

There is no right way to grieve. Men may experience some or none



of the symptoms of grief above. Men may experience a period of intense grief or more mild symptoms of grief. The type of grief experienced can vary widely, regardless of their relationship with their loved one.

We do not get over grief, we get through it. It is important that we honour our dead and share our grief into the future. After a death, we move forward into a world that has changed personally and permanently, but we do not leave our loved ones behind. We carry them with us, with the knowledge that our bonds cannot be broken, even by death.

Dave's wife Sue died in 2016:

DAST helped my wife Sue and myself with all the paperwork mentioned in this booklet. They also accompanied us to the coroners inquest. This made life a lot less stressful.

I also built up the courage to go to one of the bereavement group meetings - ten ladies and me, but I was made very welcome.

I made the decision while going to these meetings to move forward and make the most of my life.

If you think there is no future after your partner dies I can truthfully say yes there is. I have been lucky enough to have found love again and in 2021 I married again.

Here Ruth shares some of her thoughts with us:

My grief is still very raw as John only passed away in September 2020. Here are some thoughts of mine and tips for coping in your grief.

Try and get out for a walk every day, even Better with a doggie in tow.

Write down your thoughts in a Journal, it helps to get them down on paper and is very therapeutic and also you can look back to see how things are going and see if you feel any stronger.

Also keep in touch with friends; write, email or pick up the phone to talk. I have several close friends already widows themselves, so they have a greater understanding of what it's like losing your husband after being together for many years.

I have several photos of John around my home and I talk to him everyday. Sometimes just to talk about everyday things or to tell him how much I miss him and love him.

If your thoughts bring tears, let yourself cry and don't hold your grief inside. Below is a quote which I spotted:

"It's Okay to cry when there is too much on your mind. The clouds rain too, when things get heavy "

Give yourself permission not to feel Okay about yourself.

Be your own best friend, do something you enjoy, read a book have a bubble bath, watch a favourite film or anything you enjoy doing.

Yvonne's husband died in 2015, her advice is:

Try to hang on to memories of happier times, they will help sometimes to ease you through these sad times. Crying, laughter are just emotions don't feel guilty.

Talk - too often we bottle things up to ease the upset of others. Be kinder to yourself. You matter too.

With baby steps often one step at a time is all we can do, never feel guilty for the good times that will happen. Your loved one would not mind.

This heart pain will subside, the devastation will calm but with no timescale. Your grief is just that Yours!!! Without love there would not be grief.

Mary shares what has helped her:

I try to keep up with things that Basil loved. During the summer months I attend to the little veg plot in the garden that he loved to do, it also lets me meet people who walk buy as this is in my front

garden. I also walk along the tow paths on the canals, we walked along these before & during his illness, it brings me so many happy memories.

Winter months are a bit more difficult as I do lots of baking, especially his favourite fruit cake, only problem being that, I tend to eat too much of it! I also find sleeping difficult sometimes and I have a cushion made from one of his shirts which I cuddle with to feel close to him, I do so miss the hugs.

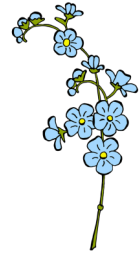


Part Three: Health and Wellbeing

When someone you love dies, your whole world can be turned upside down and you may even question everything you formerly believed in. What seemed important before your loss may no longer feel like a priority. This may include looking after your health and wellbeing by eating well, getting enough sleep, monitoring alcohol intake, exercise etc. Suddenly none of these things seem to matter as much.

It can be particularly hard to look after yourself when shock is involved as this can have an enormous effect on your body. Shaking, nausea, increased heart rate and feeling faint are all common reactions that can go on for days or even weeks after someone dies. This can make it incredibly hard to eat or sleep. Shock is fundamentally a protective mechanism that stops you from having to deal with the full pain of the emotional trauma you are experiencing. The physical symptoms can temporarily distract from this, at least some of the time.

Whilst some people experience appetite loss and inability to sleep, others find the opposite. As we have said before, everyone's response to grief is different. In this section we have provided some general advice for looking after your health and wellbeing at this difficult and challenging time. Looking after your health and wellbeing won't bring back the person you have so sadly lost but it can help you feel more able to cope with your grief. There will still be bad days and less bad days and we will miss them forever but ultimately, our loved ones would want us to look after ourselves and find as much joy and purpose as we can in our lives.



How Are You?.....I'm Fine!

"I'm fine", has been called our most common lie and yet is an acceptable answer in today's modern world, and it takes the pressure off both people. You can almost sense the inner signs of relief ripple, 'Thank goodness I don't have to explain what I really feel like' or 'Thank goodness, they aren't going into any detail'. This small white lie takes the pressure off everyone involved.

How many times have you been asked the question, "How are you" and responded with "I'm fine", or something similar? When actually you're not fine, you are actually feeling..... well feeling what?

Feeling	Inadequate	Nothing	Empty
Frustrated	Insecure	Nervous	Exhausted
Fear	Isolated	Neurotic	Emotional
Falling	Ignored	Not good enough	Enraged
Feeling	Inadequate	Needing	Encouragement

'I'm fine' paints over what we really want to say and does not even begin to reflect how we are truly feeling and what life is like for us in reality. The real answer might be scary to share and complex to

explain. So instead, we smile and say, “I’m fine”, we adjust our masks and play our roles – this becomes the new norm for us. Sometimes, you’ll find that the mask feels like it fits and at other times you’ll even start to believe it yourself - that you are fine.

But, when the other person walks away, you might find the mask tugging at your skin and remember, ‘No, I am actually not fine at all.’ Who wants to really hear the true story? Do they want to hear it over and over? This underlines the importance of having a few good friends that we can be honest with. And if that is a step too far, you can write your feelings down as a way of releasing them, or look for a support group or counselling.

Remember the mantra—It’s ok to not be ok!

Sleep

Not being able to sleep when you’re grieving can feel like additional torture and you can go to dark places at 3am or find you get unpleasant adrenaline rushes when you wake suddenly. You may be extremely sleep deprived for the first few weeks but once the shock recedes somewhat and your nervous system calms this should hopefully improve, albeit gradually.

Sleep has a much deeper impact on both our physical and mental health than we have previously thought, with the quality of our sleep as important as the quantity of sleep that we get. We know that being sleep deprived negatively impacts how our brain functions, increases our sensitivity to pain, increases hunger signals which can lead to over eating, and increases the risk of cardiovascular disease. Recent research shows that sleep deprivation has a huge effect on our immune health too and can increase our susceptibility to infection. If we are not getting adequate sleep, our stress hormone levels are increased which impairs our immune function and our overall health.

It is recommended that you make sure you get at least 7 hours of sleep each night to avoid weakening your immune response to the cold and flu viruses which circulate, particularly in winter.

Here are some tips for improving our sleep quality:

Blue light - switch off all electronic devices (phone, TV, laptop, tablet) at least 60 min (ideally 90 Min) before sleeping

Temperature - ensure that your bedroom is about 18/19c at night as this helps regular our circadian rhythms and helps us to sleep.

Bath or shower - some people find taking a bath or shower before bed to be relaxing

Television/ laptop - if possible, do not watch television or work on your laptop in bed so that you associate bed with relaxation and sleep.

Gratitude journal - consider writing down 5 things that you are specifically grateful for that day before you sleep as this will help you to focus on things that are positive than those that you are worrying about.

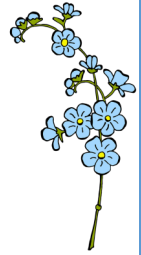
Meditation - there are many free apps to help with sleep and meditation. Or listening to some quiet soothing music can help to relax both the body and mind.

Breathe in, breathe out- Controlled breathing can promote feelings of calm and relaxation.

Take a single breath in, focusing on the sensations you are feeling - the air drawn in through your nose, your chest rising, your breath out, your chest falling. All the time let your mind recognise your body's movements, only concentrating on what you are feeling in that moment. As thoughts drift in, let them come but let them go, like a cloud that floats across the sky. As your breathing slows, your blood pressure drops and your muscles relax. You feel calmer.

Bedtime routine - most people benefit from a regular bedtime routine as this helps the body and brain recognise that it is time to sleep. Dimming the lights in the evening, eating last meal at least 3 hours before bedtime, doing the same thing in the same order helps to bring the mind to rest.

Bed and bed linen - Get a comfortable mattress, a pillow that's at



the right height for you and a duvet and blanket that works for you.

Diet and exercise can also beneficially impact on the quality of our sleep and we shall be looking at these next.



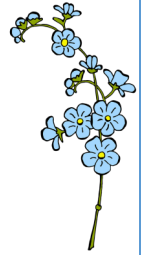
Eating Well

If you're lucky, some kind friends and neighbours may bring you meals. If anyone asks you what can they do to help when they hear of your loss – say this. You probably won't feel like making meals initially or even shopping so this is about the best thing anyone can do to help to begin with. We have known many people early in bereavement saying that they couldn't eat very much at all, let alone cook, but when someone made a meal, they felt (relatively) better physically and emotionally afterwards. Blood sugar balance is important for mood and you don't want to feel worse than you need to so it's vital not to go too long without eating. Stress uses up nutrients – and grief is very stressful.

When it comes to feeding yourself, remember, it's fine to eat what you feel like and whatever is easiest in the early days following your bereavement. There may be days where you plan to cook something only to feel unable to do so when it came to making the effort. That's completely okay and if you end up having more takeaways (or chocolate) than usual, don't worry about it.

When you're grieving you might experience decision fatigue. This happens in response to the number of decisions you've been forced to make over a very short period of time, deteriorating the quality of those decisions.

As you can imagine, what you eat – the result of small decisions we make throughout each day – is a common victim of decision fatigue. Suddenly, making “good” choices about what you eat seems strenuous and even debilitating. So you opt out of the decision altogether and forgo eating, or make the easiest and most comforting decision and gulp down go to comfort foods.



In time, you may find it helpful, both physically and mentally, to get into a routine again regarding eating a healthy and balanced diet, you will feel better for doing so. The stress of grief can increase inflammation in the body, affect your immune system, your digestion and energy levels amongst other things, so the better your diet the stronger you will be physically and, viewed holistically, that in turn will have an effect on your emotional wellbeing. And visa versa...

Here are some tips that might work for you:

- ◆ Planning is key; if you already know what you’re going to eat during the day, there’s no decision required.
- ◆ Prepare “emergency” frozen meals in advance so they’re ready to go when you need something healthy fast.
- ◆ Use paper plates and plastic utensils if dish-duty seems overwhelming. Eating healthy is more important than reducing your carbon footprint right now.
- ◆ Try to enjoy cooking. Put on soothing background music and experiment to keep yourself interested.
- ◆ Snack healthy with fresh fruit, vegetables and low-fat dip, nuts, etc
- ◆ Eat real food, not processed food. Stock your fridge with fresh produce, leafy greens, nuts, chicken and other protein sources. Avoid boxes, cans and microwave dinners.
- ◆ Cut back on caffeine, sugary drinks, white breads, alcohol and sweet desserts. They’re not going to help you right now.

- ◆ Plan each day's meals ahead of time (and prep the food so it's easy to throw together or pull out of the fridge).

Emotional eating:

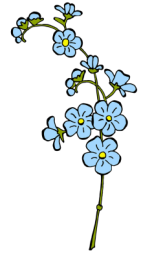
Many people eat when they're stressed. And perhaps there's no more stressful time than when you're grieving the loss of a loved one. Emotional eating is when you use food to make yourself feel better; basically, eating to satisfy emotional needs, rather than a way to satisfy physical hunger. It's very common, but you don't have to let it overtake you. At this time, it's important to keep yourself as healthy as possible so you can get through this tough time.

There are actually many reasons that grief and comfort eating go hand-in-hand:

- ◆ Eating makes us feel good and lures us back for more: That's because food, especially fats and sugars, can trigger the reward system in our brains.
- ◆ Fatty foods make us happier — in the moment: While we may feel less sad for a few moments, that deep grief always comes crushing back once we've finished our binge.
- ◆ We think we deserve it: In our culture, we are adept at rationalising our behaviours. After going through something traumatic and devastating, we very quickly rationalise our eating habits by convincing ourselves we deserved it. There's no problem in splurging here and there. We've all had those bad days when it seems like we DO deserve it. It's when it becomes an everyday occurrence that it gets serious.
- ◆ Nothing else seems to matter: You may think: I've just lost my loved one...why should I care?...
- ◆ It's just there: We eat when we grieve simply because it's there.
- ◆ We have no desire to cook: Grief saps you of all energy. Some days it's all you can do to get out of bed and drag yourself to the shower, let alone be tasked with the ordeal of cooking a

full meal.

- ◆ **We're bored:** When grieving, you often find yourself with too much time on your hands as your old routines have fallen by the wayside. This can result in a lot of mindless eating, simply because you don't know what else to do.
- ◆ **We associate food with comfort:** From the time we are very young, food is used as a way of cheering us up or rewarding us. It's no wonder we automatically turn to our favourite comfort foods to ease the pain of grief.



So, we know that food has a significant impact on our emotional, physical and mental well-being. There is also mounting evidence that food can make us feel better or worse, depending on what we eat and when.

Because of the strong link between the gut and the brain, imbalances between the beneficial and harmful bacteria in our gut can cause mood disorders such as anxiety and depression.

Food also affects our blood sugar levels which in turn impact upon our energy, concentration and mood. Do you notice how tired and irritable you become when you have not eaten for a while? Or how your energy levels dip after eating bread, pasta, chips, pizza or dairy?

These comfort foods are better avoided as they either contain sugar (lactose in milk) or are readily turned into sugar by the body. While they may be emotionally uplifting in the short-term, very soon our energy levels crash. Not ideal when we need more energy, not less!

The same goes for all types of processed foods such as processed meats, fish or chicken nuggets, packaged snack foods or pastries. Apart from sugar, they are typically full of preservatives, additives, sodium, trans fat and artificial ingredients that not only make us feel sluggish and do not provide any nutrients, they may also cause food intolerances because of their high histamine levels.

The best way to combat low energy, mood and motivation would be to have three regular meals and as diverse a diet as possible to keep our gut bacteria happy, prevent blood sugar fluctuations and help us feel satisfied for longer.

But being recently bereaved changing your diet on top of everything else might just be too much.

So, what can you do if you do want to have more control over how you feel?

The key is to make gradual changes - one small step at a time. Here are a few suggestions to help you get started:

- ◆ Ask friends or family for help with grocery shopping and cooking.
- ◆ Have breakfast if you normally don't bother. This may help set you up for the day.
- ◆ Add protein to every meal to stave off cravings for potentially unhealthy snacks.
- ◆ Gradually replace highly processed foods with mood-boosting foods such as vegetables, fruit, beans, lentils, nuts, seeds, oily fish and healthy oils.
- ◆ Avoid sugar or replace it with natural unprocessed sweeteners such as dates, raw honey and maple syrup.
- ◆ If you do nothing else, just drinking 1 tall glass of water half an hour before lunch and dinner will improve your stomach acid and help with food digestion and absorption.

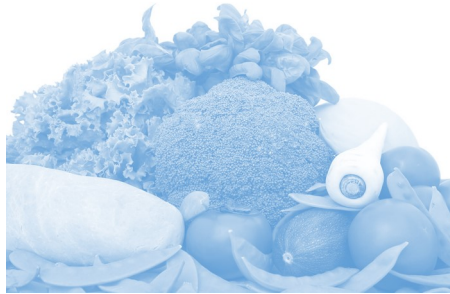
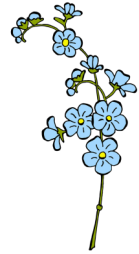
In summary, eat well:

A well-balanced diet is essential as you withstand the stress of grieving. That means eating plenty of vegetables, fruits, and lean proteins, and drinking plenty of water and other healthy liquids. If your appetite is diminished, try eating small portions more frequently.

Take necessary medications. Grief makes people more vulnerable to illness, so it's important that you keep taking your regular

medications.

Because of the effects of grief and stress on our immune, nervous and digestive systems, a good quality multi vitamin and mineral supplement together with a probiotic can be a valuable back up. Please speak to your GP about dietary supplements.



Exercise

We cannot underestimate the benefits of doing some form of age and ability appropriate exercise every day. A simple walk, a bike ride, yoga, chair based exercises or a harder workout can ease agitation, anger, and depression. Depending on your needs, exercise can provide you with a distraction when you need a break from grieving, or offer you some quiet time to focus on your loss. Here are some gentle exercises, suitable for most people:

Move it or Lose it - by Joanne Gordon

It is important to move – gentle exercise is beneficial for everyone it:

- ◆ Boosts energy and lessens fatigue
- ◆ Improves physical function
- ◆ Increases appetite
- ◆ Increases body mass, muscular strength, endurance and bone strength
- ◆ Reduces effects of stress on the body
- ◆ Helps after treatment of chemotherapy and, of course, we

have all read about the benefits of exercise to improve mood and mental health

I undertook a 'Move it or Lose it' programme some years ago. The exercises have been developed by experts and the programme is split into Flexibility, Aerobic, Balance and Strength (FABS). The exercises aim to make you feel "fab!".

To make this accessible to everyone we are focusing on chair-based exercises. I will be covering exercises in the Aerobic, Flexibility, Balance and Strength section.

For the chair-based exercises what do you need?

The chair needs to be something like a kitchen chair, not a recliner or sofa chair and preferably not with arms.

Don't overdo anything and if you are struggling, stop. Don't work through pain.

So, the first thing is good posture



- ◆ Sit towards the front half of the chair
- ◆ Feet and knees hip width apart
- ◆ Shoulders back, down and relaxed
- ◆ Chin as if resting on a shelf
- ◆ And sit tall

If you are struggling in this position put a cushion behind your back

You also need to know the 'Hip Walk'

This enables you to move to the front half

or third of the chair to perform seated exercises. Upon completion of the section, 'hip walk' backwards to the back of the chair.

This is the Hip Walk

- ◆ Hold on to the chair for support
- ◆ Lift each hip in turn to raise your bottom from the chair and 'walk' forwards
- ◆ Ensure feet move too



WARM UP – START OF “AEROBIC” SECTION

EXERCISES

Arm roll - I like this as it's fun.

- ◆ Roll arms around forwards then backwards at waist height
- ◆ Raise arms going up and down – but not too high
- ◆ Take arms round and round in a circular motion, clockwise and then anti clockwise
- ◆ Don't take arms too high – keep below head height

Why do it? - Helps movement of shoulders, reaching into kitchen cupboards and increases stamina and endurance.



Tap and clap – you can make some noise.

- ◆ Sit in front third of the chair
- ◆ Tap and clap out to the side
- ◆ Start at waist height
- ◆ Tap your knee and clap - Keep clapping at waist height

Why do it?



Great circulation boost, mobilises the shoulder joints and core muscles. I think this is one of the exercises to cheer you up too. Clapping along to music is good and we clap to applaud and as a sign of enjoyment so a feel-good movement.

One for the legs – Marching

- ◆ Sit tall
- ◆ Don't raise your knee too high
- ◆ Try not to stamp
- ◆ Do not let your toes drop as your foot is lifted
- ◆ Put your foot flat on the floor.

You can include your arms in this exercise. We encourage opposite arm with opposite leg. You may need to practise as it is like patting your head and rubbing your stomach. You need to start arms and legs together or it won't work. Trust me I've tried.

Why do it?

This is a good circulation booster and improves strength in legs and helps to aid walking. The aim is to increase breathing rate and aerobic fitness.

You can put this exercise to music. Research has shown that listening to music can reduce anxiety, reduce blood pressure and pain as well as improve sleep quality, mood, mental alertness and memory. I usually use 'Take it Easy' by the Eagles, but you can use whatever music you wish.

If you would like more aerobic exercises please contact DAST on 01246 380415 or joanne.gordon@asbestossupport.co.uk



STRENGTH SECTION

This section improves muscle strength and endurance through resistance. Improves muscle tone, joint stability, posture and bone density

Sit to stand

- ◆ **Sitting in the “good posture” (as described in the first section) draw your feet back so knees are over toes**
- ◆ **Push down into the feet, lean forward and use momentum with your arms to push up from the chair to stand fully**
- ◆ **Pump heels for a circulation boost**
- ◆ **Be careful – sitting down – touch chair with back of legs then lower back down slowly**
- ◆ **Hip walk forward and repeat (Aim to do this at least 5 times, if you are able to do so, and then increase)**

Why do it?

This is a vital exercise to aid everyday living as it strengthens the muscles in the legs, hips and bottom. Helps to give you strength to get out of your chair and also when climbing the stairs. You can do this exercise any time, even in front of the TV.



“Today I will love myself enough to exercise.” Anonymous



Strength - Biceps Curls

In a class this would be done with resistance bands, but you can find something at home to use.

- ◆ Place a tin in each hand – Must be the same size
- ◆ Hands holding the tin must be palms facing upwards
- ◆ Keep the elbows in close to the body
- ◆ Raise hands slowly towards the shoulder
- ◆ Slowly release back down to starting position in a smooth action

Repeat at least 5 times at first then increase

Why do it? - Strengthens wrists

BALANCE SECTION

This section helps to improve balance as well as strengthening the muscles and ligaments that stabilise the ankles, knees and hips. Balance is so important.

Aim to do 3 sets of 10 seconds

Seated leg raise – this is an alternative if you struggle to stand unsupported. (For those who can stand unsupported, please follow One leg balance exercise)

- ◆ Sit back in chair, fully supported and holding chair sides. If you have shorter legs you may wish to sit forward and use a cushion if required.
- ◆ Raise one leg, try to hold for 10 seconds then lower down
- ◆ Repeat 3 times for each leg

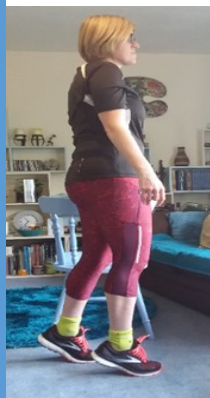


One leg balance

- ◆ Stand with chair support at first – hold on with one hand. You can try unsupported if you feel comfortable later but not at first
- ◆ Soften the knee of the supporting leg
- ◆ Raise one foot off the floor and hold for up to 10 seconds. Swap legs.
- ◆ For support stay close to the chair



Toe Walking



- ◆ Stand with chair support (or unsupported if you are able to do so)
- ◆ Raise both heels and walk forwards and backwards on the balls of your feet
- ◆ Imagine walking in high heels
- ◆ For support stay close to the chair

FLEXIBILITY SECTION

Hug a Tree – Whilst sitting, stretch both arms outwards and forwards as if hugging a big tree. Imagine you are hugging the Major Oak Tree in Sherwood Forest. Visualise yourself putting your arms around this big tree.

Feel the stretch on the upper back

Look forward and slightly down but not too far

Hold for 10 – 20 seconds

Why do it? - This exercise is good for the back, shoulders and neck



Hamstring Stretch

- ◆ Sit tall towards front of the chair to allow one leg to straighten out in front with heel on the floor
- ◆ Place hands on bent leg and lift ribs away from hips
- ◆ Lean slightly forward from the hip supporting upper body on hands
- ◆ Hold stretch 10 – 20 seconds then repeat on other leg



Why do it? - This maintains flexibility in the hamstrings and lower back. Tight hamstrings can reduce walking ability and can lead to lower back pain.

COOL DOWN SECTION

I like the cool down exercises too, as they are more mindful and you can use visualisation, which again has proven to reduce stress and anxiety. The cool down gradually lowers heart rate and improves co-ordination and concentration.

I put these to music also. Something chilled out. Classical music or instrumental music with no words is best so you concentrate on the movements but if you would like words or something more upbeat, when I was doing the course, another trainee used 'Dock of the Bay' by Otis Redding and it worked well.

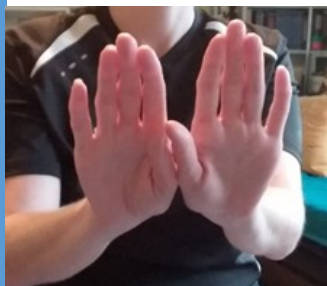


Bubble Circles

- ◆ Imagine holding a ball so keep the palms same distance apart with fingers relaxed
- ◆ Take the ball round in a circular action, increase or decrease size of circle to vary the motion

Sunrise and sunset circles

For Sunrise - start with small circles and get larger



- ◆ Place hands together with palms facing outwards and move hands outwards and upwards in a circle
 - ◆ Start with elbows bent then progress to straight arms
 - ◆ The movement comes from the shoulders
- ◆ Don't reach up higher than your head and don't tip your head back to look up

For Sunset

Start with larger circles and move inwards.
Visualise a wonderful sunset or sunrise

Push the waves



Push both hands forward and back rhythmically with palms facing outwards

Introduce heel to toe rocking to match arm action

Imagine pushing against resistance – pushing waves.
Visualise a beautiful beach with waves.



**Any questions about these exercises, please do not hesitate to contact Joanne at DAST on 01246 380415
Copyright - Move it or Lose it**

Grief and Spirituality

When we think about grief, the first thoughts are normally how it affects people emotionally. Are they feeling anger, guilt, sadness or loneliness, for example. But grief affects people in other ways too, it can change how people think, and it can change their behaviour. It can affect a person spiritually.

Spirituality is how a person finds meaning in life. It is how a person finds a sense of peace and purpose and feeling connected to something bigger than themselves. There are plenty of spirituality examples where people experience and express their spirituality for different reasons and in different ways:

Religious ways such as:

- ◆ Buddhism
- ◆ Islam
- ◆ Christianity
- ◆ Judaism

Non-religious ways such as:

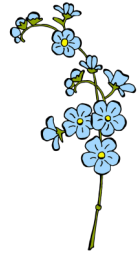
- ◆ Humanism
- ◆ Environmentalism
- ◆ Social action



Sometimes the loss of a loved one may challenge a person's spirituality. Whatever belief system a person has, they hold on to it to make sense of the world around them and it gives them security. If the loss of a loved one challenges those beliefs then that security can also be challenged, changing the way in which a person thinks and what they now believe.

If someone finds their loss is challenging their beliefs it is important that they recognise that this is a normal reaction to grief. It is essential that they try not to leave the source of whatever grounds them or feeds them spiritually, whether it is like minded friends or a faith community. Instead, this is the time to strengthen the

connection and to be open to receiving counsel and spiritual sustenance.



You may find comfort in the rituals that your faith community provides, including rituals offered during illness and after the death. Or you may feel the need to look deeper inside yourself, examining and perhaps even changing your beliefs as you adjust to life without the person you loved. You may find yourself struggling with questions of spirituality or feel a spiritual awakening.

Every form of spirituality, each faith, has books and teachers to turn to as you try to make sense of the loss. Don't be afraid to ask, or talk to a trusted friend about the questions that fill your mind.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness has become a popular concept in recent years even though it's been practiced for centuries. It's a tool that can be used to address a variety of challenges that people face, such as anxiety, depression, overeating, problems in relationships, chronic pain and grief.

Mindfulness is a type of meditation in which you focus on being intensely aware of what you're sensing and feeling in the moment, without interpretation or judgment. This can help you make sense of what is happening to you.

Here are some thoughts to reflect on:

- ◆ From time to time, remind yourself that everyone grieves at their own pace and in their own way. Do not listen to people who suggest that you should be 'over it' in a set period of time such as one month or one year. Your grief will rise and fall. Sometimes you will feel it intensely, other times hardly at all. The intensity of your grief does not reflect how much you loved the person.
- ◆ When you feel grief arising, try not to fight it. Emotional turmoil is normal. Break down into a heap of tears if that helps. Depending on your character, you might like to allow

yourself to cry in public or perhaps alone. The choice is yours. Do not be guided by culture or convention.

- ◆ Don't try to meditate on the person you have lost until you feel ready. There is no rush. Instead, allow yourself to feel grief and to cry when you feel able. When grief becomes overwhelming, allow it to flow. You may feel more comfortable taking yourself off to a less crowded place should grief appear when you are amongst strangers or at work.
- ◆ Feel free to be as gregarious as you like or to be alone as much as you want. The company of friends and family will probably help you immensely but we all need time to be alone.

It is natural for us all to try to avoid pain and suffering. We don't want to hurt, but realistically, grief is part of the human experience. Avoiding the reality and pain of the loss is not beneficial for anyone grieving long-term, and it's important to allow yourself to feel all of the emotions that accompany grief. This includes experiencing moments of joy and peace, without self-judgement and guilt.

Mindfulness practice is not meant to minimise that pain or to convince people that everything is OK, but rather to help you recognise the reality of your circumstances, and to do so in a self-compassionate way. Mindfulness can become a way of being, but it doesn't happen overnight.

Here are three Mindfulness exercises you can try as an introduction to the practice of mindfulness:

1. Mindful Breathing

This can be done anywhere at any time and without anyone realising you are doing it. Mindful breathing involves focusing your attention on your body as your breath enters and leaves. This exercise is helpful for calming your mind and body, as well as alleviating anxiety. Mindful breathing is also particularly helpful if practiced as part of your bedtime routine, for encouraging better sleep. It can also:

- ◆ Reduce stress levels in your body
- ◆ Lower your heart rate
- ◆ Lower your blood pressure
- ◆ Improve diabetic symptoms
- ◆ Reduce depression
- ◆ Better manage chronic pain
- ◆ Better regulate your body's reaction to stress and fatigue

How to start

- ◆ Pay attention to the rise and fall of your chest, the feeling of air in your nostrils and the warmth of your breath as it leaves your body. Your mind will occasionally wander to other things, which is normal.
- ◆ When your mind wanders, acknowledge it without being hard on yourself and gently bring your attention back to your breath.

2. Mindful Walking

This is one of my favourite activities because it also includes physical activity, which can be beneficial for mood and mental health. This exercise is especially helpful for those whose grief has them feeling depressed or who tend to isolate themselves.

A nature walk can also provide an opportunity to reflect on the natural cycle of life and death and to experience the beauty in everything around us.



How to start

- ◆ If possible, start this exercise outside and spend one to two minutes standing in place before you start walking.
- ◆ Close your eyes and pay close attention to the sounds, smells, feeling of your feet on the ground, the wind on your face, etc.
- ◆ Open your eyes and take in the sights, paying attention to the colours, shapes and textures.
- ◆ When you're ready, begin walking slowly, continuing to focus your attention on the feel of your feet hitting the ground.
- ◆ As you walk, shift your attention from one sense, to another. You can spend two blocks focusing on smells, the next block focusing on sounds and so on. With practice, you won't need to have set times or distances for each sense, but you will naturally alternate between awareness of your different senses.

3. Loving Kindness

This is a type of mindfulness meditation that involves self-talk. Loving kindness is especially helpful for people who struggle to find acceptance or are being self-critical of their progress through grief. This exercise can also be done to show loving kindness toward the person who died.

Using mindfulness with grief is not intended to take away your pain, or even to diminish it, but rather to acknowledge the pain and to face it head on instead of running from it. I have found that it often takes more effort and energy to avoid grief than to let

ourselves experience it.

If you would like to find out more about mindfulness and how you can put it into practice in your everyday activities, there are details of useful resources in our Directory towards the end of this booklet.

How to start

- ◆ The premise is to create a type of mantra to recite to yourself silently, or out loud, that helps you move toward accepting these words as true. You can create your own mantra specific to a certain issue you are struggling with.
- ◆ Examples: May I be find peace, may I be forgiving, may I have the courage to face the future, etc
- ◆ You mantra can change according to where you feel you are at, for example when you are really struggling you could adopt the mantra - It's OK to not be OK today
- ◆ Simply say your mantra silently throughout the day (as needed).

Journaling

Journaling (or keeping a diary) is an ancient tradition, that dates back to at least 10th century Japan. Journaling usually involves the practice of keeping a diary or journal that acknowledges and explores thoughts and feelings surrounding the events of your life.

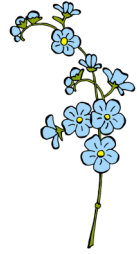
Not only is journaling a mindful practice that's been shown to reduce stress and anxiety, but scientific evidence supports that journaling provides other unexpected benefits. The act of writing accesses your left brain, which is analytical and rational. While your left brain is occupied, your right brain is free to create, intuit and feel. In sum, writing removes mental blocks and allows you to use all of your brainpower to better understand yourself, others and the world around you. Journaling can help you:

- ◆ **Clarify your thoughts and feelings** - If you've ever felt all jumbled up inside, unsure of what you want or feel, setting aside a few minutes to jot down your thoughts and emotions will quickly get you in touch with your internal world.
- ◆ **Know yourself better** - By writing routinely you will get to know what makes you feel happy and confident. You will also become clear about situations and people who are toxic for you which can help with your emotional well-being.
- ◆ **Reduce stress** - Writing about anger, sadness and other painful emotions helps to release the intensity of these feelings. By doing so you will feel calmer and better able to stay in the present.
- ◆ **Solve problems more effectively** - Typically we problem solve from a left-brained, analytical perspective. But sometimes the answer can only be found by engaging right-brained creativity and intuition. Writing unlocks these other capabilities, and affords the opportunity for unexpected solutions to seemingly unsolvable problems.
- ◆ **Resolve disagreements with others** - Writing about misunderstandings rather than stewing over them will help you to understand another's point of view.

There are no hard and fast rules with journaling, but we suggest you try doing it daily for about 20 minutes, to



reap the most benefits from it. Begin anywhere, a thought, something you've heard or seen, how you felt, what made you smile, what angered you. You don't have to worry about spelling, punctuation or grammar, this is for your eyes only. You can write on a note pad, in a booklet or keep a typed journal on your computer. The key is to write quickly with putting too much thought into it. This frees your brain from "shoulds", and other blocks to successful journaling. If it helps, pick a theme for the day, week or month (for example, peace of mind, confusion, change or anger). The most important rule of all is that there are no rules. If you are keeping a handwritten journal (which I must admit is my preferred option), you can add doodles, sketches, or little keepsakes that you can stick into the book.



You don't have to write about your thoughts and feelings. You don't have to write about what you did that day. You can fill your journal with doodles and day dreams or rants. The point is to take a moment to write or draw and unwind, not to meticulously record every last thing that happens to you.

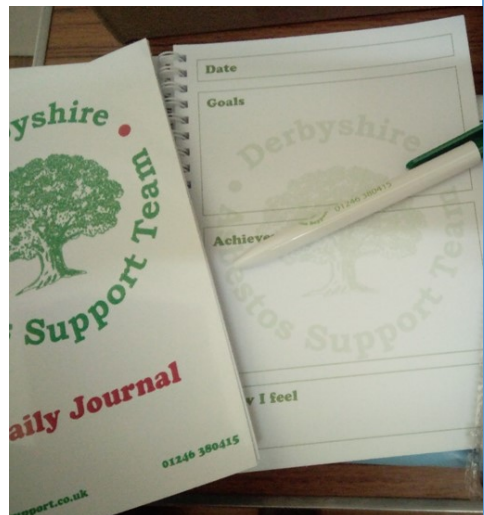
If you've not tried journaling before, DAST have a daily journal booklet. This is a easy way in to trying it and gives some structure for those who are new to it. Each page is set out with 3 boxes titled:

Goal

Achievements

How I feel

You can choose anything as your goal – it all depends on the changes that you would like to make. It could be something that encourages you to improve your physical wellbeing. Perhaps you need a little motivation to go outside more:



- ⇒ I will walk to the shops instead of driving this week, or
- ⇒ I will use a pedometer app on my phone to monitor my step count, and aim for at least 1000 steps every day this week

Your goal might be about your mental wellbeing. Perhaps you feel aware that you are being too busy and not taking time for yourself. In this case, your goals might be:

- ⇒ I will take a long bath instead of a quick shower, or
- ⇒ I will go to bed at 9pm every night this week and read a book.

At the end of your chosen time frame, you then record what actually happened in your achievements box, followed by a short comment on how it has made you feel.

By writing down your goal you are making it real. It is no longer a vague idea floating around your head but a considered challenge. When a goal is in black and white (or whichever colour pen you choose to use), you are more likely to make the effort to achieve it. When you can fill in your achievement box this leads to a sense of pride in yourself, which lifts your mood. Then by recording this mood lift in the feelings box, you become more likely to repeat the task, or even set a new goal which is a step up from the original. At a future date, you can look back over the pages of the journal and see how far you have progressed.

If you would like a DAST Daily Journal, contact us on:
mail@asbestosupport.co.uk

Telephone: 01246 380415.

“Journal writing gives us insights into who we are, who we were, and who we can become.” – Sandra Marinella





Part Four: Becoming Me

Rediscovering the new you

Who are we after we suffer a bereavement? In our society we often identify ourselves by our relationships... somebody's, son/daughter; somebody's wife/husband; somebody's father/mother. In relationships when we get together and/or marry 'I' becomes 'we'. Loss of self identity is not what we expect following a bereavement but part of the grief journey is rediscovering the person you are now. I remember a particular lady, some months after her husband died, saying to me that she missed and grieved for the person she used to be, part of the carefree happy couple that they were. Sadly she also said that she didn't like the person she is now, without her husband.

Does our personality change following the death of a loved one?

Who are we after we suffer a bereavement?

Many people believe that a new person emerges from the grief. From being a couple for many years you now have total responsibility for all daily challenges. The confident sharing of all life had to offer you has gone. With it the person you once were, for some people, seems to have disappeared. Coming to terms with accepting this lonely pathway is part of the healing process.

You are not the same person, but eventually you can be stronger, able to face your new situation with more confidence. There will be happy moments with family or friends but also sad angry moments of "Why has this happened to me"?

Then you may have moments of "I cannot cope with this". However there is no choice. The situation is real and you have to cope for your own sanity and for your families' sakes. Most people also do it for their loved one's sake.

Grief can also re-write your address book. Friends shift, a distance may arise between friends or family of the person who died. This can lead to another shift in relational identity, feeling a loss of community and connection to loved ones who are still living.

Part of regaining a sense of self after the loss is accepting that identity is going to be different than it was before. There will always be a deep sense of grief around the people and things in life that we lose, this does not mean there will not be other things that bring a sense of purpose, joy, and contentment and that will slowly become part of your identity.



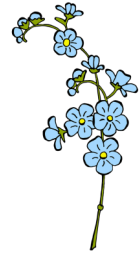
WHO
AM I?

It is important to remember also, that you can bring the past into the present. The person you lost, the person you were, those are all things that will still be a part of you as you go forward.

Here are some tips for making that adjustment and moving forward:

- ◆ **Allow yourself to grieve** - Grieving is normal. There is no time limit on grief, although the intensity of it tends to lessen with time. Do it your way, you don't have to follow other people's expectations of what is normal or appropriate. However, if you have any signs of depression and/or the prolonged inability to reconnect with your life we recommend you speak to your GP.
- ◆ **Fight, Flight or Freeze** - You may be familiar with this phrase, which usually means our innate response to events outside our control. A similar analogy is Define, Destroy or Drive. Loss often requires us to make a choice between one of the following: Will this loss define you, destroy you, or drive you? What would your loved one want for you? What will you choose? For most people, it would be the latter.
- ◆ **Find and embrace your village/community** - Friends, family,

and bereavement support groups can provide much-needed support during this time of loss. Be willing to accept it.



- ◆ **Avoid prolonged isolation** - Alone time is something we all crave at times, even when we aren't dealing with loss. It's natural for you to want to grieve in silence or to be simply alone to reflect on treasured memories, and that's okay. However, in time, try to be in the company of others when it makes sense. Prolonged states of loneliness can lead to depression.
- ◆ **Set realistic goals** - If you are someone that responds better to setting goals, make sure they are realistic. And by realistic, I mean anything that feels real for you. Don't worry about what everyone else thinks. What will you do with your loved one's possessions? Have you tied up all loose ends pertaining to their business affairs? Take action according to your own timetable what makes most sense to you.
- ◆ **Prioritise Self Care** - This is so important. Self-care is easy to overlook, especially during this time. However, remember, when you are not taking care of yourself, everyone in your circle suffers. Keep to your own medical and dental appointments. Don't be afraid about contacting your GP if you are worried about any health issue. Remember to get proper sleep and eat well. Avoid over indulging on alcohol, the relief it may give is only short lived and excessive use can lead to further health problems. Make time for yourself to indulge in something that makes you feel good. Make self-care a non-negotiable task.
- ◆ **Honour your loved one's memory** - You are the one person best placed to know how best to do this. What would he or she want you to do. What can you do to keep his or her memory vibrantly alive. Find a cause or organisation that is related to your loved one's interests. Volunteer; host a fundraiser in their name.
- ◆ **Discover or create a sense of purpose** - We all have one.

What's yours? Loss, unfortunately, reminds us that life is finite. Follow your passions to create a sense of purpose, and begin to live it every single day. You are worthy!

- ◆ **Give yourself permission to move forward with your life, guilt-free** - Whether we want it to or not, life does go on—with or without our input. However, the world would definitely be a better place with it! If you've experienced a loss, we encourage you to allow yourself to mourn, get professional help, if needed, be present for your family, and take care of yourself. Most importantly, remember that as difficult as it may seem now, loss does not have to equal lost.

It can be difficult to know what to do with your life, you may feel daunted at the prospect of trying new things. However, once you are ready, trying new things or going back to the things you used to do can help you manage grief and stop you from feeling lonely.

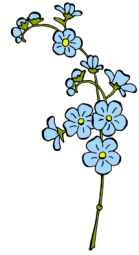
Some things you could do are:

- ◆ Volunteering or Time Swap
- ◆ Adult education classes or learning something new
- ◆ Taking part in social activities or groups. Join the University of the 3rd Age (U3A). This is a UK-wide movement of locally-run interest groups that provide a wide range of opportunities to come together to learn for fun. Members explore new ideas, skills and activities together. You can check to see what activities there are in your area.
- ◆ Get involved in supporting other bereaved people.

Being Safe

Adjusting to living by yourself can be difficult and you may find yourself, for the first time having to deal with household and financial matters on your own. It can seem pretty daunting at first so please do ask for help from family and friends. Thinking and planning can help you prioritise what needs to be done and what you may need help for.

1. **Make a list of everything you need to do. Write down everything involved in the upkeep of your home, from paying bills to grocery shopping. This is likely to include home and car insurance, utility meter readings, financial matters such as banking, savings, Car servicing, boiler servicing, subscriptions etc. Repairs and home and garden maintenance.**
2. **Prioritise each task. What are the urgent tasks? What needs to be done every day, and what needs to be done less often? It's useful to make a note of what needs doing when, dates for renewal etc.**
3. **Set a schedule and keep to it. A schedule can apply to everything, from cooking and cleaning to paying bills and keeping appointments. As soon as you receive a bill, make a note in your diary when it needs to be paid. Make sure your schedule is well spaced out so that you are not overload with too much to deal with in one go.**
4. **Make a separate list for all major household jobs that need doing. Such as gardening, any renovations or work needed on the house. Then start asking family, friends and neighbours for recommendations.**
5. **We have already spoken about the importance of healthy eating. But if it was your partner who planned and prepared all your meals, suddenly eating well can seem a daunting prospect! Family friends can help with shopping and you might want to consider a meal delivery service. More details about these can be found in the directory at the end of this booklet.**



Money can be hard to manage even at the best of times. Here are some tips to help you plan your finances:

- ◆ **Sort out your household bills and make sure they're in your name.**
- ◆ **List what you're likely to spend to work out a realistic budget,**

including money for social outings.

- ◆ Write down everything you spend for a few weeks to give yourself an idea of your actual living costs.
- ◆ Look for ways you can make savings - for example, switching energy or telephone suppliers.

Be Scam Aware!

Many newly bereaved people find their new status as a widow/widower leaves them feeling particularly vulnerable.

Unfortunately, there are some unscrupulous companies and individuals who will seek to exploit your vulnerability. There are also doorstep and telephone con-artists who may try to persuade you to pay for something that is not necessarily legitimate, required or at a reasonable price.

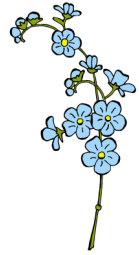
Scammers and unscrupulous tradespeople have been known to target those who have recently been bereaved. We recommend that if you need any jobs or work done about your house and garden to only use tradespeople that have been recommended by a family member, friend or neighbour. There are also schemes run by local Authorities such as Check a Trade and Trusted Traders which give some protection from cowboy tradesmen. There is also a website called My Builder, on here you can post a job (plumbing, electrical, carpentry/joinery, garden services etc), you may need doing and trusted traders will contact you offering to quote for the job. (Again details can be found in the directory at the end of this booklet.)

Pension Scams - Fraudsters will try different ways to persuade you to part with your pension cash - from promising opportunities that are simply too good to be true, to giving you false information.

Phone scams are a common way for criminals to con people out of money. Be aware of some of the most common phone scams and find out what you can do to stay safe. Some of the most common ones, via telephone and text messaging include:

- ◆ Calls/texts from a Bank

- ◆ Computer repair—claiming your computer has been compromised
- ◆ Compensation Calls
- ◆ HMRC Scams
- ◆ Amazon
- ◆ Covid Testing and Vaccination scams
- ◆ Cost of Living Help texts



The aim of all scams is to extract information and/or money from you for non-existent or poor quality, unnecessary services. We recommend that you register with the Telephone Preference Service to reduce the number of unwanted sales, cold calls and scam calls. You can also speak to your phone provider to see what other privacy services and call blocking services are available.

Doorstep scams take place when someone comes to your door and tries to scam you out of your money or tries to gain access to your home. Doorstep scammers aren't always pushy and persuasive, they may seem polite or friendly. So if you're not expecting someone it's important to be vigilant when you answer the door, especially if you live on your own. Common doorstep scams include:

- ◆ **Rogue traders:** A cold-caller may offer you a service you don't really need. They may claim to have noticed something about your property that needs work or improvement, such as the roof, and offer to fix it for cash or an inflated price.
- ◆ **Bogus officials:** People claim to be from your utility company as a way of gaining access to your home. Always check the ID of any official, and if they're genuine they won't mind waiting while you check.
- ◆ **Fake charity collections:** A fraudster may pretend they're from a charity and ask you to donate money, clothes or household goods. Legitimate charities will all have a charity number that can be checked on the Charity Commission

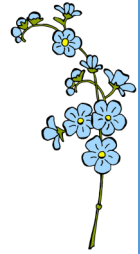
website.

- ◆ **Made-up consumer surveys:** Some scammers ask you to complete a survey so they can get hold of your personal details, or use it as a cover for persuading you to buy something you don't want or need.
- ◆ **Hard luck stories:** Someone may come to your door and ask you to help them out with cash, ask to use your telephone or claim they're feeling unwell. The story is made up and intended to con you out of your money or gain access to your home.

Postal scams are getting more sophisticated and it can be difficult to spot the difference between scam mail, junk mail and offers from legitimate companies. Here are common types of postal scams you should be aware of:

- ◆ **Lotteries and prize draws** - You may receive a letter congratulating you on winning a cash prize. But you won't receive any prize, and you may be asked to call a premium rate number or to pay fees to 'release' your prize.
- ◆ **Psychics and clairvoyants** - Psychics and clairvoyants may send a letter claiming to have seen something in your future and asking for money to disclose what it is. Don't respond – although the letter may look as if you've been specially chosen, this type of letter is sent out to millions and is a scam.
- ◆ **Pyramid schemes** can take the form of chain letters or investment schemes that offer profits for little or no risk. Don't join the scheme – if it seems too good to be true, it probably is. Pyramid schemes often involve overpriced products of no real value. You may receive a threat intended to scare you into responding, ignore these too.
- ◆ **Hard luck stories** - With these types of stories, the fraudster may claim to have lost all of their money in unfortunate circumstances or that they need to pay for an operation, and will ask you for money. These stories are fake. Don't respond!

- ◆ **Unclaimed inheritance** - You may receive a letter addressed to you, which tells you that someone has left you money in their will. Always check with the Solicitors Regulation Authority as to the authenticity of such letters. They regularly receive reports of similar scams and post them on their website.



Staying safe online - Online scams are becoming increasingly sophisticated and many people are caught out, even those who are regular internet users. But there are ways to avoid being taken in by scams if you know what to look for. We will go into online scams in more detail in the next section of this booklet, 'Staying Connected'.

Investment scams and fraud - are usually difficult to spot because they're designed to look like genuine investments. The scammers may have a professional looking website and documents. As a rule of thumb for keeping safe from these:

- ◆ Reject cold calls. If you're called about an investment opportunity, the safest thing to do is just hang up.
- ◆ Check an investment opportunity using the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) Warning List online tool.
- ◆ Check that the investment company is on the FCA Financial Services Register.

Could it be a scam?

Be #ScamAware

cts Chartered Trading Standards Institute

NATIONAL TRADING STANDARDS
Scams Team

Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy

- ◆ Don't feel pressurised or rushed into making a decision. Always seek advice before investing, ideally from an Independent Financial Adviser who is authorised by the FCA.
- ◆ Check the FCA's list of unauthorised firms and individuals.
- ◆ Be careful of companies that are based overseas as they may not be regulated.

Staying Connected

Being bereaved can be one of the most lonely experiences you may go through. Individual loneliness is defined by what a person wants in relation to what they have. So whether a person has 100 great family and friends, if they long for something or someone they don't have –like an intimate partner, a friend they can open up to, a group of people who “get them,” a family, etc. – they are liable to feel lonely.

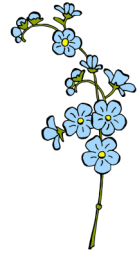
People who are grieving are at a disadvantage when it comes to loneliness because the person they long for is gone. I've come to understand that loneliness after the death of a loved one is many things. Above all else, it's the ache of having loved someone so much that pieces of you became them, and pieces of them became you.

Once your brain starts thinking in an “I'm on my own, so I have to look out for myself” kind of way, it may start to guard against others by pushing them away. And as you might expect, this perpetuates feelings of loneliness.

You can't easily solve loneliness caused by grief. It takes time and effort. You will never fill your loved one's void, that simply won't happen. Instead, you have to find other ways to connect and fill in alternative spaces.



This is made especially hard in the current times we find us in and forced isolation due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. With ongoing restrictions and lockdowns in different parts of the UK, many people are still cut off from their usual support. This isolation can make feelings of loneliness and grief much more intense.



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 can find yourself distracted from dealing with your grief. You might be worrying about the situation as a whole, or worrying about yourself or others.

So it is more important than ever to try and stay connected with family and friends and even make new connections.

Over the past year technology has proved a priceless life-line to many people. When we have been unable to meet with family and friends face to face, technology has been there for many. Long telephone conversations, emails, FaceTime and WhatsApp chats, Zoom family nights and quiz nights and shared birthday celebrations. At DAST we regularly host virtual support groups, quizzes and chat rooms for people to feel at least some sense of connection with others who understand them and “get them”.

While you may feel alone (and in some cases are, physically) know that you don't have to be alone with your grief. You can call or text your friends and family. If you find some of them are not responding in the way you hoped this is often about their own fears and situation. Or they might be feeling helpless, as they know they can't fix your grief. It can help to explain what you need at this time – whether that is someone to call in the middle of the night or someone you can share funny stories about the person who has died with.



If you would like to find out more about how you can connect with

others virtually, through the internet, please do give us a call and we can talk you through your options.

Whilst the internet and technology has helped to keep many people sane during lockdown it isn't without its dangers.

Email scams - Scammers send bogus emails in the hope that people will enter their personal or financial details. They may direct you to a fake website or trick you into thinking you've won a lottery or prize.

Some emails, known as spam or junk, may also have a link or file attached for you to click on or open. Opening these links or downloading the files may harm your device.

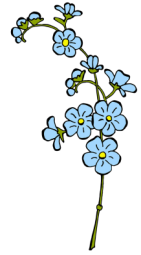
Scam emails can look genuine and appear to be from official places, like HMRC or a bank, but you can often tell it's a scam. Look out for:

- ◆ errors in the spelling or grammar, or an unusual style of writing.
- ◆ requests for personal information, such as your username, full password or bank details - genuine organisations will never ask this.
- ◆ threats that unless you act now, a deal will expire or your account closed.

Fake websites - Scammers create fake websites which look official, requesting you to provide personal or financial information. For example, a fake bank website may be set up asking you to update your account or security information. Often, they will look very similar and only a few details may be different.

There are also websites set up to look like a copy of a service offered by government websites. For example, websites which offer to help you apply for a passport renewal or a new driving licence. Although they are not illegal, these websites charge extra money if you use them, rather than going directly through the official government department where the service is free of charge.

Computer viruses - Computer viruses (sometimes called malware), are rogue programs that spread from one computer to another. You may be sent an email with an attachment, which when you click on it will release a virus.



Criminals can then use this to take control of your computer, or the virus may scan your computer for personal information. It can also slow your computer down, send out spam email or delete files.

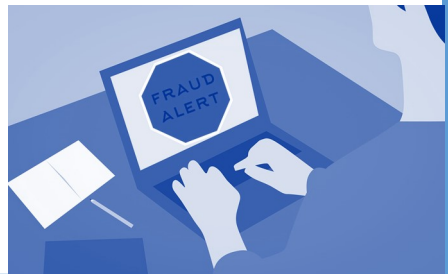
You may even get a phone call from someone claiming to be from a well-known software company, like Microsoft, saying there's a problem with your computer and needing to get access to it, including your personal details. Legitimate IT companies never contact customers in this way. This is a common phone scam – hang up straight away.

Health scams - False and misleading claims may be made about medical-related products, such as miracle health cures, and fake online pharmacies may offer medicines cheaply.

However, the actual medicine delivered to you can turn out to be poor quality and even harmful to your health.

How can I protect my computer, tablet and smartphone?

- ◆ **Keep your passwords strong.** Setting up strong passwords is one of the simplest, most effective things you can do to stay safe when you're on the internet. Avoid passwords made up of common words, numbers or keyboard patterns (such as 'password' or '123456'), and don't include personal information, like your name, date of birth or any family member's details. Use different passwords for different accounts.
- ◆ **Install security software on your computer.** Anti-virus software will look for and remove viruses before they



can infect your computer, and anti-spyware software prevents unwanted adverts from popping up, and stops programs tracking your activities or scanning your computer for private data, such as credit card numbers or bank details. You can buy a package from a reputable provider, or there are free security software programs available online, such as AVG, Avast and Microsoft Security Essentials.

- ◆ **Protect your tablet and your mobile phone.** You can check emails, shop and bank online on tablets and smartphones, so they need protecting too. Start by password-protecting any devices. You can download anti-virus and anti-spyware protection for tablets and phones and a lot of the apps are free. Some free, highly rated anti-virus apps are Avast mobile security, Kaspersky internet security, and Norton mobile security.
- ◆ **Protect your wireless network.** You need to protect your wireless network (also known as Wi-Fi) so that people living nearby can't access it. Read the instructions that come with your wireless router to find out how to set up a 'key' (a type of password) so that no one else can access the internet through your router.
- ◆ **Keep your device updated.** Every device has an operating system, which is the software it needs to function properly. Your device can be better protected from viruses if you keep the operating system updated. You should receive notifications when new updates are available, but you can also update your system manually.



This may all seem pretty daunting to the newcomer to online connectivity, but please don't let it put you off. If you have the internet and a smartphone, tablet, laptop or PC, it is relatively easy to get set up and you will value the

opportunities to see and speak to friends and family when you are unable to meet face to face.



When Lucie's husband died, her adult children bought her a Facebook Portal. She has now shared in a virtual birthday party for her great granddaughter, group video calls with all her grandchildren, took part in family quizzes and now regularly video calls her family, grandchildren and friends.

"It's always lovely to hear their voices, but now I can see them as well, see how quickly they are growing and laugh with them, and it brings them closer to me."

Poems and Stories of Loss and Hope

Here at DAST we have an amazing community of patients, carers, bereaved, volunteers and supporters. We always feel humbled and honoured to help, support and walk alongside people through their experiences of asbestos disease, loss, and grief. We have been amazed by the resilience and hope shown by the people we meet, and deeply touched by the desire they have to support and help others

Here we have a collection of insights, stories and poems from those who have been bereaved through an asbestos related death. Each of the contributors hope that their experience, their words, may be of some hope, reassurance and comfort to you who are just beginning on this journey.

Our first contribution is from Marilyn Bailey:

"My husband died of Mesothelioma in 2017. Since then one of the big questions in my mind has been: "How do I cope when I have lost half of myself?" We had been married 42 years. Having a supportive and loving family (but living at a far distance) and friends helped tremendously, but I needed more. I realised I had to take one day at a time and value that day for what it was.

Our involvement with DAST began before my husband died and has

continued because I found so much support, help and encouragement from the team. Meeting up with others who have been bereaved through similar circumstances has been enormously helpful, given me strength to go on and continues “virtually” during lockdown. Mutual understanding and empathy has been really important for me. One message is clear: be kind to yourself!

Being alone has been “foreign territory” during my life, as our home was always open to others and family.

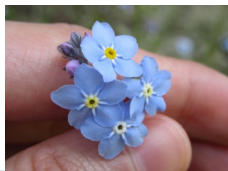
I needed to talk to someone who was outside of my situation. Counselling has helped with many important issues of loss, and sifted out the positives and negatives of my situation, while trying to be grateful for the positives! I have also found it useful to do a chart of “ what I am making time for” and “ what I am not making time for”!

Exercise and dog walking have been really important. I have also read several books on bereavement and can particularly recommend: “Travelling Solo” by Jo Cundy and “The grief survival Guide” by Jeff Brazier.

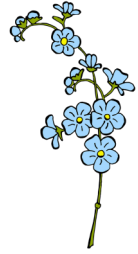
I have taken part in fundraising, including sponsored walks, horse-rides, swimming etc. I like to keep busy and have purpose, but it’s not a good idea to be too busy!

Sometimes bereavement, especially of a spouse, can feel like crossing the line into a parallel world. We can see and hear everyone else but they just seem so pre- occupied with what we might call “trivia”! It often takes energy to pretend we care about the small stuff. Hopefully the things we now value will be even more of value and we will stress less about things we realise aren’t as important.

Finally, my faith in God is very important to me and I try to think of 3 things I have been thankful for, each day.



The Everlasting Arms



Underneath “ the Everlasting Arms” we always know,
When storms of life blow strong and rocks loom larger,
When dark clouds try to devastate our peace,
Then God declares that He is working harder.

This time is no exception to the rest- but now we see
A clearer meaning of that word called “life”,
The value that the hope of Heaven can bring,
The love that comes to sweep away the strife.

How precious every minute, hour, day - not just our own
But of our children’s lives, is made much clearer.
No time for guilt or doubts or loneliness,
The Truth is so alive, the Hope is nearer.

So we are not afraid of life, nor death- we want to say,
Simply because we know that as we seek
Renewal day by day in God’s own hands,
The “Everlasting Arms” hold up the weak.

Marilyn Bailey.



A message from Yvonne, whose husband Eric died from mesothelioma in 2015

“Things I have learnt:

There isn't either a right or wrong way to feel or do things. This is your grief, your journey, we are all different. (Same road different shoes!!)

- ◆ *Be kind to yourself as you would do and be to others.*
- ◆ *Look after your health, you have to care for you now.*
- ◆ *Talk - when you want; Ask - if you need.*
- ◆ *Routine - was for me very important especially in the early days, weeks or months even.*
- ◆ *Okay - it's ok not to be okay.*
- ◆ *Name - use their name! Talk about them.*

I read a lot of books but talking to others who could empathise, even though their journey was a different road wearing different shoes, was my support and coping strategy. “

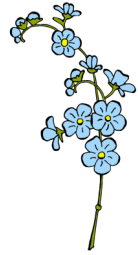
Yvonne's pet hate was the phrase 'sorry for your loss'....

“I did not leave him in the co-op. He died - not by choice but it's a fact, harsh but helpful to say.”

Julia's Story:

Just getting through the day is an enormous challenge in the early days of grief, and can still be a struggle five years later. I was widowed in January 2016 after a brief, shocking, catastrophic mesothelioma diagnosis and death. Robert, my mate for 32 years, went from being an ostensibly fit, healthy, active 68-year-old to being 'a little bit poorly', to diagnosis, to death in six weeks. Six horrifying weeks of unbelievably rapid, heart-breaking decline. Our experience really 'bucked a trend' in mesothelioma terms. Robert's consultant expressed surprise at how he presented, and believed that it must have been testament to the fact that he had kept himself so fit and well that he stayed asymptomatic for so long. His

mesothelioma, very cruel sarcomatoid mesothelioma, was apparently very advanced by the time of diagnosis, and the prognosis very poor. Maybe the speed of his decline contributed to the overwhelming feelings of hopelessness that totally enveloped us.



On the toughest of mornings, when the day ahead looked too hard, I taught myself, with help, to break time down into manageable chunks, to focus on the morning, then the afternoon, then the evening, then you realise you have actually got through a day. Every so often, there were times when even that was too much, too difficult, so I would break it down by the hour, or half hour, 'marking time'. I would set myself tasks according to how I was feeling, some days I felt almost able to clean the house from top to bottom, some days just cleaning my teeth was an achievement. I clearly remember in the early months asking my sister to leave the dishwasher and washing for me. Emptying the dishwasher and putting the washing out was about all I felt up to but I really needed to feel I'd achieved something, no matter how small, I needed something to cling on to. Every so often, there were times, however, when all of it was just too much, and a 'duvet day', just taking a day out from it all, was the only answer. Five years later I still get days like that, admittedly not quite so intense now, but still very, very painful. Acceptance helps for me, I give in to it, give myself permission to feel appalling, ride it out, cry, scream, hide away, whatever.

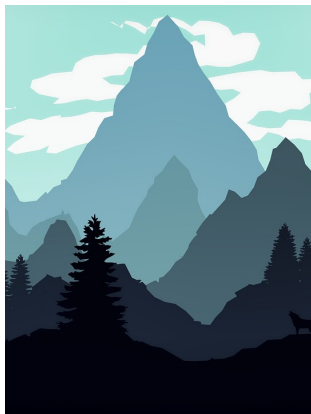
I came across this poem relatively recently that describes it so accurately:

The Mountain

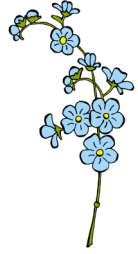
If the mountain seems too big today
then climb a hill instead
if the morning brings you sadness
it's ok to stay in bed
If the day ahead weighs heavy
and your plans feel like a curse

there's no shame in rearranging
don't make yourself feel worse
If a shower stings like needles
and a bath feels like you'll drown
if you haven't washed your hair for days
don't throw away your crown
A day is not a lifetime
a rest is not defeat
don't think of it as failure
just a quiet, kind retreat
It's ok to take a moment
from an anxious, fractured mind
the world will not stop turning
while you get realigned
The mountain will still be there
when you want to try again
you can climb it in your own time
just love yourself till then

Laura Ding-Edwards 2019 ©



The Path to Memories - By Pam Baker



*Remember the good times, people say
Maybe some time – but not today
I look from my window with a heavy heart
It seems so long we have been apart*

*Outside its bright, warmed by the sun
Flowers are blooming, spring has sprung
I'm having a bad day – but that's not allowed
I cannot sit here under a cloud*

*I'll go for a walk, feel the sun on my face
Just stroll along at a leisurely pace
I remember how we loved to walk
And often we would talk and talk*

*But now the silence hurts my ears
As I blink back a few sad tears
Along the road I see a friend
A cheery chat helps me start to mend*

*With my spirits lifted, I make my way
To a seat by a lake, where we used to stay
And rest awhile, take in the view
No-one in sight, just me and you*

*I watch some ducks go gliding by
The peace is calming, I cannot deny
Birds are singing a beautiful song
I remember the good times – they were here all along*

*I feel a presence, and no longer fear
As I know that you will always be near
And no matter what happens day to day
Memories cannot be taken away.*

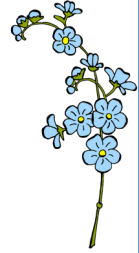
Laughter and Tears

By Pauline Smith

*I've been laughing today that's what I do
Did so yesterday, tomorrow I will too
Tears are few upon my cheeks
Concern from others not mine to seek
Never will I just sit and stare
Into a room at your vacant chair
Three years ago there was great pain
Knowing life was never going to be the same
We both knew we had to be strong
Moving towards the time you would be gone
Don't weep for me you always said
Words I remember inside my head
Final months giving my all
Until that November day you had the call
Good to know you made life count
Doing it all without a doubt
Trying to live the way you've done
Don't waste days have some fun
Life's too short to sit and mope
That in mind I know I can cope
Loving life from sunrise to sunset
Living in the now without regret
No permission needed for me to smile
Reflecting back has taken a while
Knowing this helps me move on
But never can change that you have gone.*



Ruth's Story:



In the morning of September 18th, John slowly lost his hold on life, with my son and daughter and myself by his side. I told John how much I loved him and couldn't have wished for a better man to share my life with and what a brilliant Dad and Grandad he had been. John managed to mouth to me "I love you too", before he passed away. It was a lovely peaceful death for John and that was the way we wanted it to be, at home surrounded by those he loved.

My heart breaks for John, we were married for 46 years and we loved each other so much, we were soul mates. But I knew John couldn't go on any longer, he fought his mesothelioma cancer so very bravely and he was angry that he couldn't enjoy his retirement with me. We had saved to go and do some real travelling around the world together.

My grief is still very raw and I am having bereavement counselling with Treetops Hospice. I have a little rescue dog, Jerry, who we adopted in December 2019. He is my lifeline and companion, who gives me a reason to get up each morning. He brings me such happiness, he is so funny. He had been cruelly treated before, so just as I rescued Jerry, he rescued me and helps me to carry on.

I find writing things down in a journal and talking to friends help me so much with my grief. Here is a poem I was moved to write.

'Hope'

Getting up on dark rainy mornings
Creeping down the stairs and putting the kettle on
Let the dog out and make myself a lovely mug of tea
Slipping my coat and scarf and boots on
Put my dog's lead on, heading over to the park
Whilst walking around seeing the first signs of spring
Daffodils and snowdrops pushing their way up through the cold
earthy ground
With the lovely promise of beautiful colours soon to be coming
our way
Giving us the hope of freedom again and the soon coming Spring
days.

Walking With Memories - By Pam Smith

So many times we walked this way
Up the steep lane lined with primrose and violet
Over the stile to the dark wood close by
Where bluebells and anemones weave silent magic
Rabbits scuttle, birds flutter in the treetops on high.

I remember the tale that you told our children
Of the fictional rabbit that you saved from the cold
And if you changed the story – the children remembered-
Insisting you tell it as it was first told.

When we reached the field where our horses were grazing
A thunder of hooves brought a rapturous greeting
And they nuzzled our pockets for apples and treats
While the old wooden gate provided us with hard seats
We'd gaze down on our village and you held my hand
As we talked of the future, so much we had planned.

Now I sit on the gate and reflect on those years
On the love and the laughter we were lucky to share
Oh how I still miss you! But life is for living
The birds and the bluebells, such beauty still there
I feel you're beside me, your love consoles me
So I smile and remember our past gratefully



How DAST Can Help -



If you are reading this booklet, you are likely to have only encountered DAST if you are a patient or carer. However DAST continues to offer support and advice for those who have lost a loved one through an asbestos related disease. Becoming a widow/widower is to become a member of a club that nobody wishes to join. It is to embark on a journey that you wish you didn't have to take. Through DAST, many of those who have been on the grief journey that you are now embarking on, have become a strong supportive community, who are always willing to offer a listening ear, and an understanding heart. They have been on a similar journey, albeit wearing different shoes, and their experiences, wisdom and insights can provide encouragement and hope to those who are newly bereaved. Below are some comments we have received :

“Thank you for introducing me to the Bereavement group, a very pleasant and friendly group. I would love to come along again.”

“Heartfelt thanks for all your support and in taking on our appeal. Mum has finally been able to buy some new hearing aids!”

“I was made very welcome at the Bereavement Group meeting and felt included straight away. I look forward to future meetings – thank you for that outstretched hand of help and encouragement.”

“Thank you for all the help and support you have given me and continue to do so during this absolutely terrible, difficult time. I really, really appreciate everything and enjoy our chats and your advice to me. I am finding my grief so unbearable to deal with at present. It is good to know someone is there for me.”

“Thank you for the meetings, through them I have made new friends!”

“A big thank you for the help you gave to me. Your encouragement and support is heartening and gives me hope. Thank you for your kindness.”

“I couldn’t believe it when your bereavement support newsletter came through my letterbox as it came on my husband Ted’s birthday. Reading it gave me so much comfort going through such a difficult day. I miss him so much and sometimes struggle to get through the day so it is so good to know someone is thinking about me. Thank you for your continuing support.”

Stepping Forward Magazine - This is a monthly publication full of interesting articles, messages of support, and updates on what is happening in DAST.

Befriending:- Through our befriending scheme we can put people in touch with each other, through email, telephone or letter writing, for ongoing support and understanding.

“I have to admit when I first asked about this it was never just about helping others, it was as much about helping myself, helping me feel needed - back in the carers role I was used to, less lonely talking or listening or even whilst typing the email (which I wrote in conversation style I am told). It was for me a two way win, win situation. Forming a protective friendship bubble (with Jo or Sarah at DAST for back up, support and guidance). Built on memories, understanding the "been there", "did that" "still do", "try this", "tried that"

A listening ear.....opinion not an instruction, as is so often given by family or a well meaning friend without the experience of the death of a partner or anyone close.

Becoming in my experience a TRUE BUDDY has been rewarding in many ways, contact can vary and needs to be flexible especially after the getting to know you stage, which to sustain into what for me is now friendships is so important.

It has led to meeting each other, meals out and even holidays.”

Bereavement Booths - We have several groups that meet monthly, in various locations across the East Midlands (and beyond).

Social Media and online presence - We have a dedicated Facebook group for the bereaved and regularly contribute and post on Facebook, Twitter & Instagram. The recent Covid restrictions highlighted to us the importance of staying connected through the internet where once we did it in person.

'Just because we are apart, doesn't mean that we can't be together', was one of the themes of a recent National Grief Awareness Week.

We now host a weekly Virtual Coffee & Chat and a fortnightly Quiz on Zoom, to which everybody is welcome.

Memory and Message Patchwork - The DAST Memory and Message Patchwork has been steadily growing over the past few years. Each hexagon that is added to the patchwork represents a life that has been affected by asbestos disease. Our aim is to create a powerful visual message about the asbestos danger – past and present. We will display this at our future events to help build awareness of asbestos diseases and of the work that still needs to be done.

There are two ways to add a hexagon to the patchwork:

If you are the crafty type, you can decorate your own. We will supply the blank hexagon and attach your completed work to the patchwork in return for a donation of £2.50.

We can supply a ready-decorated hexagon for a donation of £5.00. We will add a set of initials or a short name and attach it to the patchwork for you.



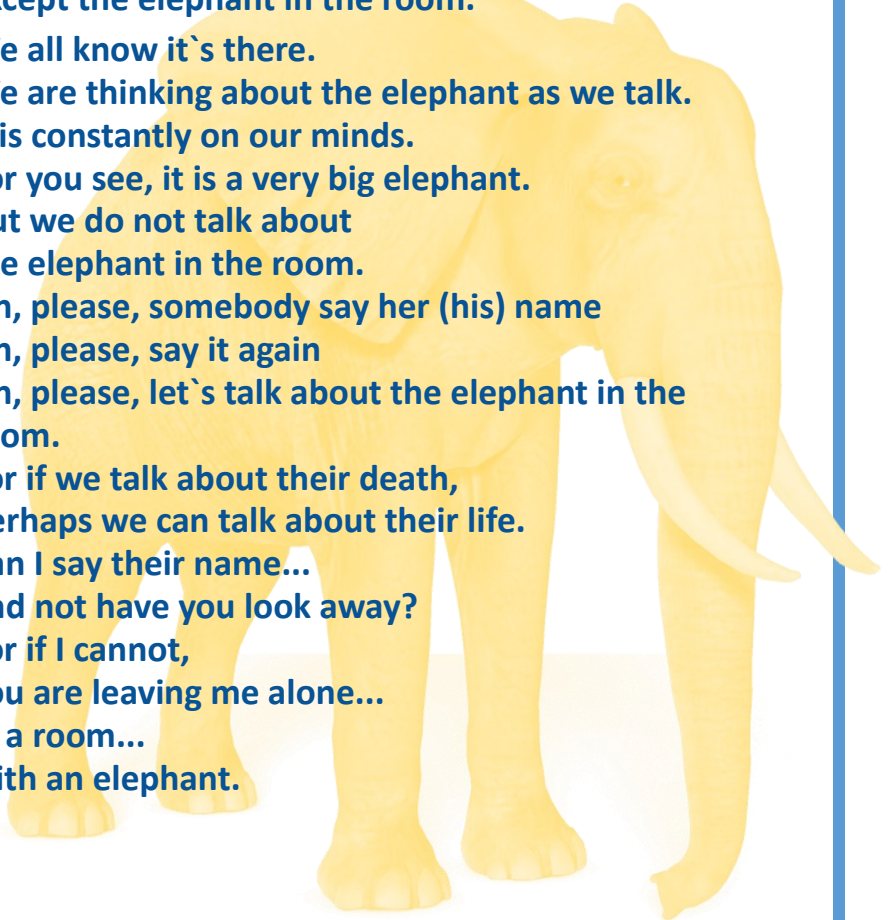
For more information, and to secure your hexagon, contact Sarah Walters on:

Sarah.walters@asbestosupport.co.uk

or Tel: 01246 380415.

Elephant in the Room by Terry Kettering

There`s an elephant in the room.
It is large and squatting,
so it is hard to get around it.
Yet, we squeeze by with,
"how are you" and "I`m fine..."
and a thousand other forms of trivial chatter.
We talk about everything else
except the elephant in the room.
We all know it`s there.
We are thinking about the elephant as we talk.
It is constantly on our minds.
For you see, it is a very big elephant.
But we do not talk about
the elephant in the room.
Oh, please, somebody say her (his) name
Oh, please, say it again
Oh, please, let`s talk about the elephant in the
room.
For if we talk about their death,
perhaps we can talk about their life.
Can I say their name...
and not have you look away?
For if I cannot,
you are leaving me alone...
In a room...
with an elephant.



Part Five:

Directory of Useful Resources



GOV.UK

<https://www.gov.uk/after-a-death>

Check what to do after a death - how to register the death, notify government departments and manage financial issues.

<https://www.gov.uk/applying-for-probate>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-coroner-services-and-coroner-investigations-a-short-guide>



HM Revenue
& Customs

<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/tools/bereavement/index.htm>

Bereavement Guide



funeralchoice

<https://www.yourfuneralchoice.com/>

Tel: 01983 754387

Offers advice around organising funerals, including a directory of local funeral directors.



Bereavement
Advice Centre

practical help when you need it most

<https://www.bereavementadvice.org/>

Tel: 0800 634 9494

Supports and advises people on practical matters they need to do after a death.



Cruse
Bereavement
Care

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/>

Tel: 0808 808 1677

Provides bereavement support, from trained volunteers around the UK. .



<https://www.thegoodgrieftrust.org/>

The Good Grief Trust exists to help all those affected by grief in the UK. We aim to find the bereaved, acknowledge their grief and provide reassurance, a virtual hand of friendship and ongoing support

bacp | counselling
changes lives

<https://www.bacp.co.uk/>

We are the British Association for
Counselling and Psychotherapy



<https://www.mpsonline.org.uk/consumer/register>

Mail Preference Service



<https://www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk/>



<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/>



<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>

Online free advice from Citizens
Advice to help you find a way
forward, whatever the problem.



<https://www.u3a.org.uk/>

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<https://www.mind.org.uk/>

For better mental health.

NHS

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mindfulness/>



<https://www.trustatrader.com/trades>

Find a local trusted tradesperson in your area

myBuilder.com

<https://www.mybuilder.com/>



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1 Rose Hill East, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S40 1NU

Telephone: 01246 380415

Email: Joanna.reeve@asbestossupport.co.uk

mail@asbestossupport.co.uk

