



Student support & career service

 Student wellbeing service

A guide for students and staff of Aberystwyth University during Covid-19

**Bereavement and Grief**

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Bereavement, or grief, is a term used to describe the sense of loss felt when someone close to us, or who we care about, dies. It can also refer to the feelings we have when we experience a loss of any kind, or are feeling a lack of closure or sufficient time to adjust to unwanted change.

This sense of loss may contain a range of emotions, such as sadness, anger, guilt, frustration and anxiety. It can be a difficult and stressful process that nearly everybody goes through at some point in their lives.

**If you are bereaved yourself**

It is essential to remember that everyone experiences grief differently and there is no 'normal' or 'right' way to grieve. The unique way that we react may be influenced by many different things, such as our age and personality, our cultural background and religious beliefs, our previous experiences of bereavement, our current circumstances and how we cope with loss.

However you are experiencing bereavement, whether directly or by caring for a bereaved person, this information is intended to help you to negotiate the bereavement, or grief, process.

 **Caring for someone who is bereaved**

If you are caring for someone who has been bereaved it is important to know how you can support them to the best of your ability, and how to look after your own well-being too; so that you are able to continue to help others.

Whether you are a family member, friend, neighbour, charity volunteer or a professional, you have an important role. Research tells us that human kindness, and caring behaviours, at this time can be a big help to bereaved people. You do not need to be a professional or have significant training or experience to give help and support. However, caring for someone who is bereaved can be challenging. This guide is intended to help support you through those challenges.

 **Covid-19 and Bereavement**

The coronavirus (covid-19) global pandemic has, and is likely to continue to, result in the substantial loss of life across many countries including the UK. It is anticipated that the University of Aberystwyth community will also experience losses which is likely to result in a very challenging kind of bereavement for most people. Due to this challenging kind of bereavement, it is really important that people bereaved by covid-19, and those caring for them, receive prompt support, advice and guidance.

We know, from research, that early support and care for bereaved people can mean that it is easier, over time, to make a recovery with good mental health. By ‘recovery’ the aim is to enable the bereaved person to navigate the process from grieving to remembering. This guide is intended to signpost people bereaved by Covid-19, and those caring for them, to appropriate support and help which is free and easily accessible.

**A death from Covid-19 may mean that there has been, or will be**:

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

We hope that this guide will help to highlight some of the appropriate support and help which is free and easily accessible to you at this difficult time.

**Some words of encouragement about the bereavement process:**

*From ‘On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss’* by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and David Kessler (2005)

*“That’s really what grief has taught me. That I can survive. I used to be afraid that if I experienced grief it would overcome me and I wouldn’t be able to survive the flood of it, that if I actually felt it I wouldn’t be able to get back up. It’s taught me that I can feel it and it won’t swallow me whole. But we come from a culture where we think people have to be strong. I’m a big believer in being vulnerable, open to grief. That is strength. You can’t know joy unless you know profound sadness. They don’t exist without each other.”*

**Quick Advice for covid-19 related bereavement**

The charity **Sudden** has produced covid-19 specific bereavement advice which can be accessed as follows:

<http://www.suddendeath.org/covid-19-bereavement/advice-for-bereaved-people>

**Struggling and need urgent help?**

If you're in distress and need support, you can ring **Samaritans** for free at any time of the day or night. Freephone (UK and Republic of Ireland): 116 123 (24 hours) or email: jo@samaritans.org

**Aber University student wellbeing service**

We are still accessible via telephone and skype, please register with the Student Wellbeing Service, **by completing our online registration form** where you will be able to tell us about the issues you are currently experiencing, and a Wellbeing practitioner will contact you ASAP. You will be able to access the registration form through our webpages:

<https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/student-support/current-students/student-wellbeing/>

You can also email or phone our service: 01970621761/2087 studentwellbeing@aber.ac.uk

**Helplines**

There are various national helplines who will be able to give free and quick advice and support to you:

**Cruse Bereavement Care** – free helpline 0808 808 1677 offering free advice, information and support to adults, young people and children who are struggling to cope with grief. Monday-Friday 9.30-5pm (excluding bank holidays), with extended hours on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings, when it is open until 8pm.

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

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

**Survivors of Bereavement By Suicide** – free helpline 0300 111 5065 (9am to 9pm daily).

**Online support / resources**

Staff and students are able to access a number of on-line support groups, details of which are listed below:

**Big White Wall** is an anonymous online resource available to you for free as a member of Aberystwyth University. Signing up is easy – go to [www.bigwhitewall.com](http://www.bigwhitewall.com) and use your uni email address to join. The email address is only used to confirm you have free access and then you pick an anonymous username, which is how you’re known on BWW.

**CRUSE Bereavement Care**

**Cruse Bereavement Care**: provide a range of services including online support

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/coronavirus-dealing-bereavement-and-grief>

West Wales helpline: 0800 288 4700

email: westwales@cruse.org.uk

 **MIND** <https://www.mind.org.uk/coronavirus-we-are-here-for-you/>

**Aberystwyth:** 01970 626225 or[http://mindaberystwyth.org](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fmindaberystwyth.org%2F&data=02%7C01%7C%7C9cf6cd341a6a479ccf1108d76e3715ce%7Cd47b090e3f5a4ca084d09f89d269f175%7C0%7C0%7C637099055363602850&sdata=t%2F0JD36t42pCqKcn1jYrFs5fg8UvjBs5OiIfCszTOfg%3D&reserved=0)

**Samaritans**: [https://www.samaritans.org/wales/how-we-can-help/schools/universities/](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.samaritans.org%2Fwales%2Fhow-we-can-help%2Fschools%2Funiversities%2F&data=02%7C01%7C%7C06b3adfb47eb41bcdc9208d799b45e01%7Cd47b090e3f5a4ca084d09f89d269f175%7C0%7C0%7C637146872252905342&sdata=lxgxrmOWRsmtSMvxiXq3dOnRG6NujPdqe7MhbQB9df0%3D&reserved=0)

**Downloadable Leaflet** – Understanding Bereavement available from:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/coping-with-bereavement/>

[The Mix](https://www.themix.org.uk/) have an online chat forum for young people. .

[WAY Widowed and Young](https://www.widowedandyoung.org.uk/) - the only national charity in the UK for people aged 50 or under when their partner has died. It’s a peer-to-peer support group.

[NHS Choices ‘Grief after bereavement or loss’](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/coping-with-bereavement/) has information about how to cope, mental health and wellbeing.

[Whats your grief](https://whatsyourgrief.com/) : offers an online supportive community, resources and discussion about grief.

**Support for staff** is available from the Employee Assistance Programme <http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/hr/employment-information/eap-carefirst/>

**Apps**

**Child Bereavement UK** offer an app for 11-25-year-olds who have been bereaved of someone important to them. It can also be used by friends, teachers, parents, and professionals who would like to know how to support bereaved young people. You can find out more **here.**

**Calm** offer an app to help you manage your mood during the grief process; with meditation. You can find out more **here**.

**Bereavement Counselling**

**Cruse Bereavement Care:** provide free bereavement counselling.

**Area 43:** Free online counselling for 16 – 30 year olds:

[https://www.area43.co.uk/here-for-you/](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.area43.co.uk%2Fhere-for-you%2F&data=02%7C01%7C%7Cdf1323af07d144a1e71108d7bf48af27%7Cd47b090e3f5a4ca084d09f89d269f175%7C0%7C0%7C637188191210988723&sdata=KS8SdXDwyejbaRLJ3kkjU1SVt005qmDDfX1XrTN12H4%3D&reserved=0)

**Counselling for staff** is available from the Employee Assistance Programme <http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/hr/employment-information/eap-carefirst/>

**Reading about bereavement and loss**

*On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss by* **Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and David Kessler** (2005) 8

**The Compassionate Friends** have also compiled a suggested reading list with books; categorised for ease of reference. See the list **here.**

**Faith Provision**

‌The University's Faith Space is located on the Penglais campus. To book the University Faith Space between 5pm-9am you must complete the room booking form and the sign the booking agreement. [Faith Space Room Guidance and Booking Agreement](https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/media/departmental/equalityanddiversity/Updated-Interfaith-Space-and-Room-Booking-Agreement.docx)

The Faith Space is otherwise open to all University Staff and Students between 9am-5pm.