



Employee
Assistance
Programme



EAP Newsletter

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Making People Better

The supporting others edition

In this month's newsletter we talk about dealing with grief, understanding suicide, managing back-to-school anxiety and rheumatoid arthritis – a quick guide.

This newsletter includes information about sensitive and potentially triggering topics.

Dealing with grief

Grief is the term given to describe the feelings and reactions of the bereaved. It is entirely normal and necessary and affects everyone, albeit in very differing ways.

Bereavement is part of a human process, and it often follows a well-defined course starting with denial and ending with acceptance. Grief can feel overwhelming but you can begin to recover with the right support.

We've put together five helpful points to know about, to help explain the process and shed light on your feelings...





Five important things to know about grief

1

Grief does not have a set time frame

Grief can last for weeks, months, or years. It may come and go around holidays, anniversaries and major life events, or it might always be in the background. However, grief does tend to lessen in intensity over time.

2

Grief hurts, but it can be helpful

The process of grieving often involves sadness, loneliness, and other painful emotions. However, grieving can help you come to terms with loss and move forward in life, while still cherishing memories of your loved one.

3

The circumstances of a loss have a major impact on grief

Deaths that are unexpected, traumatic, or stigmatised (such as suicide) can complicate the grieving process. Personal factors, such as a history of mental illness, or a strained relationship with the deceased, can also contribute to difficulties.

4

Grief may contribute to other problems

Grief increases the risk of developing other health problems, mental illness, and relationship difficulties. This is especially true if the death was traumatic, if you or the bereaved person feels guilt about the death, or if grief is prolonged.

5

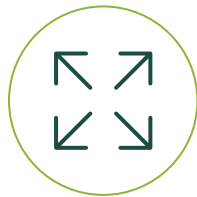
There are no right or wrong ways to grieve

Some people cry, others don't. Feelings and thoughts can change from moment-to-moment and day-to-day. In time the intense emotional swings will lessen as you, or the bereaved person, begins to adapt to the change of living without the person who has died.



How to support someone who is grieving

It can be really difficult to talk about death and loss and it's completely normal to feel unsure of what to say when trying to support someone who is grieving. It may be that you really want to help someone but are worried about saying the 'wrong' thing or upsetting the person. Here are some of the ways you can support someone who's grieving:



Give them space

Some people who are bereaved may feel stress or guilt if they do not, or cannot, reply to messages straight away. Let them know there is no pressure to respond but you are there for when they'd like to talk. Ask them if they'd like you to check in regularly or give them space - don't assume what they need at this time.



Reach out and don't avoid contacting them

Staying silent or not contacting somebody after their bereavement can often make feelings of isolation and sadness worse. It can be really helpful to reach out to the person who's grieving so that they know you are there for them and available to talk and listen.



Consider the best way of contacting them

Receiving text messages may be easier for somebody to manage than returning calls. Dropping in to see them in person may be welcome for some but may be an inconvenience for others. Ask the person what they'd prefer rather than making assumptions, which could be stressful for the individual.



Talk about the individual who died

While you may fear that talking about the deceased person will cause sadness and bring up painful feelings, many people find comfort in, and actually appreciate, the opportunity to talk about the memory of the person. Finding this a comfort and a way of integrating the memory of the person. Be gentle in your approach to the conversation - ask them what their favourite memory is or reflect on positive times they (or you all) had together.



Help them find additional support

If they are ready and interested in getting more support, particularly if their grief has lasted a long time, help them explore additional support options. www.ataloss.org is a good place to start. They can help you find the right bereavement service and counselling support.



Focus on the bereaved person

Whilst you may have your own experience of bereavement and feel you know how that person is feeling, try not to compare to your own feelings of loss. Focus on them and what they are voicing to you.



Actively listen

Respect what they are choosing to share with you and focus on listening rather than finding out more. Give them space to open up if they want to, and do not force them to talk if they do not want to take the conversation further.



When to seek professional help with grief:

One of the important aspects of this process is that there does come a time when external help may be appropriate. If there's no shift in the intensity of emotions in the first few months, it may be worth getting professional help - for example from a GP or a therapist - to discuss the way that the loss is being experienced. Sometimes people do get stuck but the right approach can help and enable them to move forward.



Podcasts to help you or others on the journey through grief

Dipping into a podcast can be useful if you're looking for companionship, stories of others' experience or even advice, in your grief journey. You should be able to access the below via whichever app you use to listen to your podcasts.



Griefcast

"My goal right from the beginning was that I wanted it to be a podcast that, when it stopped, you didn't feel worse," says Cariad Lloyd, host of Griefcast, a weekly interview podcast where media personalities share stories about loved ones they've lost.



Grief Encounters

Grief Encounters is a weekly podcast series that looks at an issue that affects us all and yet remains so difficult to talk about: grief. Hosts Venetia Quick and Sasha Hamroge hope to open up the conversation around loss and create a modern platform for people to share their own experiences, and start an open dialogue around the subject of death and all that comes with it.



The Art of Dying Well

This podcast aims to make death and dying something we can talk about openly without discomfort or fear. Presented by James Abbott, our award-winning show features James in conversation with a guest on a key topic related to the Art of Dying Well, taking in everything from being at the bedside of a dying loved one, to receiving a terminal diagnosis. Coping with grief, bereavement, death, dying, and much more are all under discussion.

Understanding suicide

Samaritans are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.
If you need help, call **116 123** for free or email jo@samaritans.org

Every year on September 10th, communities around the world come together for **World Suicide Prevention Day**, to raise awareness of how we can create a world where fewer people die by suicide.



The latest facts and figures on suicide

5,219 suicides were registered in 2021. This is **307 more** than in 2020*.

Males aged 50-54 were found to have the highest suicide rate*.

More than **1 in 20** people make a suicide attempt at some point in their lives**.

*ONS **Samaritans



Signs that someone may be suicidal

Some people considering suicide may hint at or even disclose to friends or relatives that they intend to take their own lives. Other people who are feeling suicidal might not mention it at all or give any indication of their intention. Every individual is different.

Signs that someone may have suicidal thoughts and feelings include:

- Giving away belongings
- Saying they see no way to resolve their fears or anxieties
- Withdrawing from family, friends and social activities
- Displaying unusual behaviour, such as anger or impatience, towards friends and family
- Being tearful when there is no obvious reason
- Being unable to cope with everyday routine
- Increased risk-taking
- Using phrases such as *"I don't see the point anymore"*, *"I want to go to sleep and not wake up"*, *"you'd/ they'd be better off without me"*, *"I can't do it anymore"*.

"I don't see the point anymore"

"you'd/ they'd be better off without me"

"I want to go to sleep and not wake up"

"I can't do it anymore"

How to help someone you think is suicidal

There is no evidence to suggest that asking someone if they are okay will make them feel worse. Talking can help. Here are some of the ways you can help someone who has told you they are suicidal or who you think could be suicidal:



- Empathise and be open to listening - you could say something like, *"I can't imagine how painful this is for you, but I would like to try to understand."*
- Listen without judgement - do not blame or criticise the person for how they are feeling
- Repeat what they say to you, back to them - repeating the information they gave you can help to ensure that firstly, you have understood them properly and secondly, that they know you're truly listening to them
- Ask them if they have a plan for ending their life and what that might be
- Encourage them to seek help - getting professional support, such as from a doctor, counsellor or mental health charity, is really important. Work with them to find the right help
- Signpost the individual to support they can access quickly if they begin to spiral
- Follow up on any commitments you make to them - if you say you'll check in with them the next day, ensure that you follow through with this. It's important they do not feel 'let down' as this could trigger negative feelings
- Involve their family or friends where possible - serious case reviews often highlight that friends and family were simply not aware of how that individual was feeling prior to suicide and had they known, they could have helped.

What to avoid saying to someone who is feeling suicidal

It can be really difficult to hear a family or friend tell you they feel suicidal. It's normal to feel shocked and unsure of what to say. Remember that the person who feels suicidal may feel very alone, lost and frightened. The words we choose are important and can have a big impact on the person in crisis.



Here are some things to avoid saying and doing:

- **“Cheer up”, “pull yourself together”, “you’re being silly”.** Do not belittle or invalidate a person’s feelings. Their ability to verbally express their feelings out loud could actually be a big step for them. Avoid phrases such as,
- **“Other people have it much worse than you”.** Do not compare them to others. It is really important to help the person with the reality they are facing, not the reality of others. This is not a contest where some people ‘deserve’ the right to be depressed
- **“I know how you feel”.** Mental health is incredibly individual and whilst you may feel that you can relate to how someone is feeling, it is impossible to truly know. Keep the conversation focussed on the individual who has opened up to you and do not make it about you
- **“You have a lot to live for”.** When someone is severely depressed it can be really hard for them to reflect on the positive aspects of their life.

Where to go for more support and information on suicide

Samaritans

Samaritans are available round the clock, every single day of the year. They can help you talk through whatever is troubling you, find the answers that are right for you and offer support: **116 123** (this number is free to call), email jo@samaritans.org

Cruse

Exists to promote the well-being of bereaved people and to enable anyone bereaved by death to understand their grief and cope with their loss. The organisation provides support and offers information, advice, education and training services: www.cruse.org.uk

Cruse Bereavement Care Scotland: www.crusescotland.org.uk

Facing the Future

The Facing the Future service has been developed by Samaritans and Cruse Bereavement Care to help support people who have been bereaved by suicide: www.facingthefuturegroups.org

Breathing Spaces Scotland

A free, confidential phone and web-based service for people in Scotland experiencing low mood, depression or anxiety: www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)

Can provide information about counsellors in your area: **0870 443 5252**, www.bacp.co.uk

Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide (SOBS)

Aims to provide a safe, confidential environment in which bereaved people can share their experiences and feelings, so giving and gaining support from each other. Staffed by many who have been bereaved by suicide: www.uk-sobs.org.uk

Winston's Wish

Winston's Wish provides practical support and guidance to bereaved children, young people and their families: **0845 203 0405**, www.winstonswish.org.uk

YoungMinds

YoungMinds is the UK's leading national charity committed to improving the mental health and emotional well-being of all children and young people. www.youngminds.org.uk

Student Minds

Student Minds is the UK's student mental health charity. www.studentminds.org.uk

PAPYRUS Prevention of Young Suicide

PAPYRUS Prevention of Young Suicide is the UK charity dedicated to the prevention of suicide and the promotion of positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in young people www.papyrus-uk.org

Back-to-school anxiety: How to help young people

For many children and young people, the end of the holidays and a return to seeing friends each day is an exciting prospect. However, others may find the transition back-to-school - and the structure and routine that comes with that - daunting and overwhelming.

Change can be challenging to deal with, particularly for young people, and it's completely normal to need some time to adjust.

Some children may be worried about aspects of the school itself, such as school work, making friends or having new teachers. There are other children who may have had a difficult experience over the summer holidays, such as a bereavement, family illness or conflict, or, experienced bullying - all of which can make it harder for them to feel settled at school again.



Signs your child or young person is anxious about school



Not wanting to get up and get ready for school



Saying they can't go to school



Having difficulty sleeping the night before school



Reporting that they feel unwell – feeling sick, having a stomach ache or headache



Avoiding completing homework that's been set



Withdrawing – seeming quieter than usual, being low in mood and isolating themselves from family and friends



Worrying a lot about small issues, such as having the right equipment for school



Being angry, upset, or acting out

Five ways to help your child or young person manage back-to-school anxiety



Get prepared

In the days or weeks before school resumes, move toward a realistic school routine. By doing this gradually with bedtimes and wake times, this can be less difficult to adjust to when the time comes to go back-to-school. Ensure any holiday homework is completed and if your child has been given their new timetable, review this with them. Have all school supplies ready in good time. It may be useful to do a practice run or rehearsal of how your child will be getting to and from school, particularly if they will be attending a new school.



Praise and reward

Don't be afraid to use praise and rewards to encourage your child or young person to get back into their school routine. Try to be specific with your praise and use rewards to increase motivation, for example making them their favourite dinner or putting their favourite film on as a reward for getting out of bed and brushing teeth at the agreed time. Get your child involved in this process as this will be more meaningful to them.



Communicate with the school

Let the school know if your child is having anxiety about going back-to-school and see if they can offer any further support for a successful transition.



Meet up with school friends

If possible, arrange catch ups with one or more familiar peers toward the end of the holidays before school resumes. The presence of a friendly face during this transition period can help your child or young person adjust better.



Listen to fears and worries

If your child or young person expresses anxiety about returning to school, take time to listen to their fears or worries. Acknowledging and validating their feelings - *"Thank you for sharing, that sounds difficult"* - without immediately dismissing these - *"There's nothing to worry about, you'll be fine"* - can help your child feel more secure and able to discuss their concerns further with you. Ask if they would like you just to listen and talk about it, or if they are looking for solutions and strategies that you can find together. Whatever the case, try to avoid jumping straight to wanting to problem solve or 'fix' the problem for them.



When to seek help from a medical professional:

If problems with back-to-school anxiety persist or worsen, it's important to seek guidance and support from your child's school and a GP. They may recommend a referral to another service for assessment of the support your child may need to manage and overcome this.

A short guide to rheumatoid arthritis

World Physiotherapy Day takes place every year on September 8th. This year the day will focus on arthritis, with an in-depth look at some forms of inflammatory arthritis.

We've shared a quick guide on rheumatoid arthritis, including key facts and the best ways to treat the condition.



Quick-fire facts about rheumatoid arthritis

Rheumatoid arthritis is an autoimmune arthritis that affects **1%** of the adult population.

It affects women **three-times** more commonly than men.

It can occur at any age, but most often between the ages of **40 – 50**.

Usually rheumatoid arthritis involves **joints of hands and feet**, but other joints can also be affected.



How is rheumatoid arthritis diagnosed?

The diagnosis of rheumatoid arthritis is based on symptoms and signs of joint inflammation (joint swelling and early morning stiffness lasting more than 30 minutes) with supporting blood tests and X-rays.

What's the treatment for rheumatoid arthritis?

Treatment begins as soon as possible after the onset of symptoms to treat inflammation. Treatments include a combination of disease modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs). As well as medicine, patients will have access to the multi-disciplinary team, which includes physiotherapy, podiatry, occupational therapy and clinical nurse specialists to help manage symptoms.



Our tip of the month

The one thing we ask you to do today if you do nothing else...

Check in with yourself. Have you heard the saying, "You can't pour from an empty cup?"

Essentially, it means that in order for us as humans to effectively take care of others, we must first take care of ourselves. Even small acts of self-care can have a big impact by helping to manage stress, lowering your risk of illness and increasing your energy.

Schedule a self check-in into your day and try to be honest with yourself about how you're feeling.

Ask yourself:

- "How full is my cup?"
- "What do I need at this moment to help fill my cup?"
- "What activity or self-care practice will help me today?"

It's not uncommon to feel that making space in your day to engage in self-care is selfish. In reality, self-care helps us to continue functioning and supporting others as best we can.

Try to ensure self-care is not an afterthought or a reaction to feeling overwhelmed. Be proactive and try to embed it into your routine. The more frequently you check-in with yourself, the more likely you are to manage and neutralise feelings of overwhelm and burnout before they become too much.

SilverCloud Programmes on the Wellbeing Hub

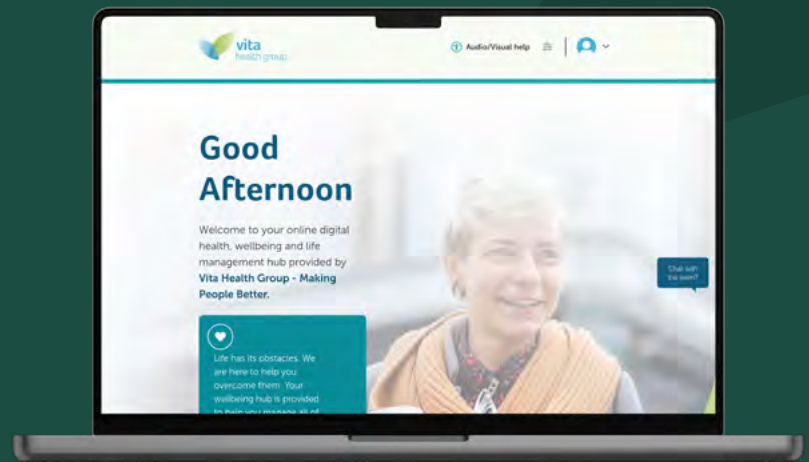


Visit our Wellbeing Hub by scanning the QR code above:

A new way to a healthier mind

1 in 4 of us struggle with mental health challenges, like feeling low or anxious.

SilverCloud programmes provide the tools and skills to feel better and stay better, helping you to improve and maintain your wellbeing by addressing underlying issues that can have a negative impact on how you would like to live your life.



What programmes are available?

Wellbeing

Programmes that give you the skills to deal with everyday issues that affect your emotional health.

Mental Health

Programmes to help alleviate the symptoms of common mental health conditions.

Chronic Health

Programmes that focus on the mental health aspects of living with a long term condition.

New programmes

- Space from Anxiety
- Bipolar toolkit

Based on years of clinical research, the programmes are interactive and delivered via a user-friendly platform. Programme modules are easy to use. Work through the activities, videos and content anytime on your computer, tablet, or phone.

Visit your Wellbeing Hub

Digital Wellbeing Programmes, free and in confidence, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Use your organisational code to access the site.

www.my-eap.com/access

Contact us

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