

Surviving Loss and Bereavement

Grief from the loss of a loved-one can seem as overwhelming at times as it is never-ending. Much has been written about the various stages of grief but, in reality, every person's experience is unique and there is no way of predicting for how long each stage might last. What is certain, however, is that being able to talk about the loss and the person involved is always beneficial: indeed, those who have little opportunity to talk about their loss are more likely to become trapped in a cycle of unresolving grief.

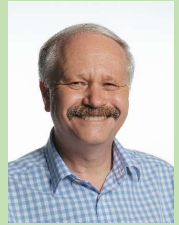
Although there is no substitute for working through the feelings of grief with family, trusted friends or a professional counsellor, it is hoped that a few of the suggestions outlined here might complement these efforts and help you on the fragile journey to acceptance and resolution.

*"Give sorrow words;
the grief that does not speak knits
up the o-er wrought heart and bids it break."*

William Shakespeare

Resources

- *Living with Loss* by Liz McNeill Taylor (2009) Robinson, London. ISBN: 978-0-71602-203-9
- *Love's Last Gift* by Bebhinn Ramsay (2012) Hachette Books, Ireland. ISBN: 978-1-44481-896-3
- Cruse offers support, advice and information to those affected by grief: www.cruse.org.uk



Dr Paul Fairchild

Some practical suggestions

- Take every opportunity to talk about your memories of the person you have lost to ensure they remain a part of your everyday life
- If such opportunities are rare, consider expressing your feelings in writing: there is something strangely therapeutic about finding the words to express precisely how you feel
- If narrative is not your preferred medium you may like to explore other forms of language and self-expression: poetry, music and art are rich ways of capturing and conveying difficult emotions
- Consider keeping a journal to chart your journey: recording the challenges is itself therapeutic but may also help you appreciate your progress. The most famous 'journal' is undoubtedly C.S. Lewis' *A Grief Observed*, written in the aftermath of his wife's death
- Avoid inadvertently creating shrines: mementos such as photographs you dare not find because of the painful memories they evoke should be integrated fully into your daily environment
- Plan a fitting tribute: a bench dedicated to the person's memory is a popular choice but others prefer to plant a tree to celebrate life. Whatever you decide, why not be imaginative!
- Consider identifying an appropriate cause to champion. Whether fund-raising for medical research, campaigning for changes to the law, establishing a charitable venture or sponsoring a child in a developing country, make sure it is something of which the person you have lost would have likewise approved