



As time passes following the death of the person you cared for, it's normal for feelings of sadness, numbness, or anger to gradually ease. While the sadness of losing someone may never go away, over time it generally changes.

There may be bad days still but there are days when you can see pleasure in activities and families and the future.

While you are grieving it can be useful to talk to friends and family about your feelings. You may also think about joining a support group. Health services and carer organisations can suggest relevant groups.

For some people however, grief doesn't change. It remains constant and severe. The following feelings may indicate that you need to talk to a health professional about how you are coping with your loss:

- Intense pain and yearning when you think of the person who died
- Heightened focus on reminders of your lost loved one
- Feelings of numbness in daily life

- Feelings of bitterness when you think about your loss
- No sense of purpose or motivation
- A loss of trust in friends, family, and acquaintances, and
- An inability to enjoy life.

If grief is continuing to severely disrupt your life talk to your GP or to someone from your health care team.





## Factsheet 2: Checklist and plan for moving forward

Many people who have cared for someone who has died find it hard to adjust to a life without the role of caring. Sometimes, they find it hard to consider life without the person they cared for.

Other times they have been caring for so long that life without the caring role feels empty. Many feel that the grief is so intense that they want to be alone.

All of those feelings are very normal. Grief can take a long time to process and it is normal for you to feel like a different person in some ways following your experience as a carer and the loss of your partner, relative or friend. Be patient with yourself and allow yourself time to grieve.

Some bereaved carers can have ongoing emotional and physical health problems as a result of their caring experience. Being a bereaved carer, increases your risk of developing serious illness. Therefore it is important that you make a plan to look after yourself and also develop a plan for moving forward with your own life, even if it is moving very slowly.

We know that having strong social connections and having some form of meaning or vocation can both have a positive impact on your mental and physical health.

This Checklist and Plan for Moving Forward has been developed for you to complete in the months following the death of your partner, relative or friend. We do not recommend you use it in the early weeks following the death. Its purpose is to help you think about your own health during this difficult time.

# 3 Grief and Bereavement



We have made a number of suggestions for ways you could look after yourself during this time. Tick the boxes of suggestions that you could try in the coming weeks.

## My physical health

- Try getting more sleep by going to bed earlier
- Reduce my intake of caffeine, alcohol or nonprescribed medication
- Eat well (increase my intake of fruit and vegetables and fibre)
- Do some gentle exercise (go for a walk, try a yoga class, exercises at home)
- Visit my GP for a check up
- Visit my dentist for a check up

## My emotional wellbeing

- Take a moment to check in on how you are feeling, specifically consider your levels of stress, distress, anxiety, depression, grief, and anger
- Make an appointment with your GP or a counsellor to discuss your emotional wellbeing
- Talk with a trusted friend or family member about how you are feeling
- Consider attending a bereavement support group
- Organise a massage or attend a meditation class

# Factsheet 2: Checklist and plan for moving forward

## My social wellbeing

- Invite a friend over for a meal
- Try and reconnect with a friend you haven't seen for a while
- Choose someone who was kind to you when you were caring and call them to thank them
- Suggest a family get together
- Try and attend a new group, something that you are interested in and where you can meet new people (bridge club, dancing group, lawn bowls, cycling or walking group)
- Have a look and see what community events are happening that you could attend

## My vocational wellbeing

- Find out if there are any opportunities to join a committee, become an advocate or become a volunteer
- Sign up for a short course
- Find out about classes or groups for any interests or hobbies that you would like to pursue
- Call your employer and discuss your options for returning to work

## If things are not improving

You should not expect life to return to exactly the way it was before caring. Things have changed. You have changed. However, you should feel like you are moving forward and taking small steps towards making a life for yourself.

If it has been many months since the death of your partner, relative, or friend, and you don't feel like you are moving forward in any way, contact your GP or other health professional. Some people do develop a more complicated form of grief that does need specialist support. See our resources and helplines information sheet in the Carer Library.

Use the above checklist to make a plan for yourself for the coming weeks which will help you look after yourself, stay healthy, connect socially, and explore new interests.

