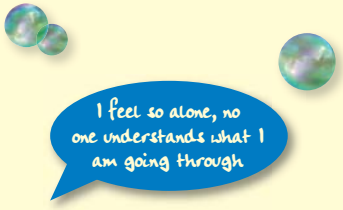
Bereavement counselling

A guide for young people

If someone close to you dies it's called bereavement. This could be a parent, grandparent, brother or sister, a school friend, boy or girlfriend or someone close to your family. The way you feel after they have died is called grieving.

It can be a time of great sadness and you may feel all sorts of strong emotions that you don't know what to do with. We can listen and help you understand your feelings. At Wandsworth Bereavement Service we have talked to many young people who have experienced the loss of someone significant to them.



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How Counselling can help

Children and young people can find it hard and frightening to recognise feelings on their own. For some, it is easier to experience these intense feelings when they are with a counsellor. This is because the counsellor is not a close friend or relation and they can feel less worried about burdening, upsetting or overwhelming them.

Counselling can help children and young people express their thoughts and feelings about the person they have lost, through words, images and play.

Who will be working with the children and young people?

The Counselling Team is made up of counsellors who are accredited by the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy and trainees who will soon qualify. All our counsellors have had additional training in working with bereavement and are CRB checked.

This is a free service for children and young people who live in the Borough of Wandsworth.

How to contact us

Please either phone or e-mail the office to make an initial appointment. If the office staff are busy, you will get the answer machine but please do not be put off by this – leave a message and someone will return your call as soon as possible.

Phone: 020 7223 3178 Fax: 020 7978 5775
Address: 192 Lavender Hill, London SW11 5TQ
Email: children@wandsworthbereavement.org.uk
Website: www.wandsworthbereavement.org.uk

WBS is an independent registered charity mainly funded by NHS Wandsworth.
We welcome donations and gratefully receive contributions towards maintaining the Service.
Registered Charity No. 1074904 Company No. 3628933

Wandsworth Bereavement Service for children and young people

A child who is supported through loss, separation and endings can develop the capacity to manage loss and bereavement in the future.

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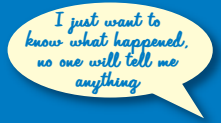
How a child or young person may show their grief

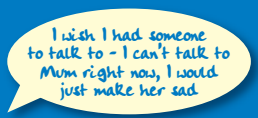
A child's understanding of death will depend on their age, previous experiences and what they may have been told about death.

A bereaved child or young person is likely to regress to an earlier stage of development that feels more familiar and safe to them. Children have a rich imagination and if they are not told the facts, it may cause misunderstanding and distress.



Children go in and out of grief; they become more sensitive to what is happening around them. Their feelings can be different and often confusing to them but they can also be OK and play normally. This can appear as if they don't care or aren't coping very well.

Some children can be very direct and matter-of-fact about death. Others may become withdrawn and speak very little. Sometimes a child can feel frightened by the strength of their own feelings; they may feel afraid of upsetting the people they love by asking questions or mentioning the person who has died.



Wandsworth Bereavement Service for children and young people

Wandsworth Bereavement Service provides counselling to children and young people between the ages of 2 to 18 years of age, who have been bereaved or are about to face the death of someone close.

Accessing the service and making a referral

Anyone can ring the Service to discuss a child or young person they are concerned about. An initial appointment will then be set up. For this session a parent/carer will need to accompany children who are younger or vulnerable. All appointments are confidential.

When we see younger children, it is a requirement that we have written consent from the person who has parental responsibility for the child.

Vulnerable children will need to be brought to, and collected from, their sessions.

Here is some information about what to expect if you come to us for bereavement counselling

Would I have to come on my own?

Usually a parent or carer will come with you for your first appointment. We can then discuss whether you feel happy having your counselling session on your own.

A young person may ring us themselves to discuss a bereavement.

What would we talk about?

The first session provides the opportunity to meet a counsellor. A face to face conversation can be reassuring at such an over-whelming time and help you focus on what you want.

The counsellor may ask how you are and if you want to talk about the different feelings you may be experiencing.

If you don't feel like talking much, that's OK too. Sometimes drawing, writing or just playing can be a good way of exploring your feelings. The rooms have some toys and art materials which you can use to help you explore and manage your feelings.

How often would I come?

The sessions are on the same day each week and last for 50 minutes. We offer between 6-12 sessions. The counselling takes place in a safe, confidential and quiet room, at Lavender Hill or our other locations.

How do I make an appointment?

You can ring us on 020 7223 3178 or a parent, guardian or health worker can ring to arrange appointments.