



St Monica Trust

Bereavement: for managers and colleagues

July 2023 (update)

Introduction

We know, from research into bereavement and people who work in care settings, that people who are able to validate their loss will experience greater growth from it. The ability and time to process loss and bereavement is important for you and your well-being. St Monica Trust colleagues across our services and villages tell us that the relationships formed with residents and customers, and indeed with each-other, are very close and we know that having support during grief is essential for all our roles.

On the opposite side of the coin, not dealing with grief effectively will lead to burnout, compassion fatigue and loss of job satisfaction. In some of roles you will find yourself dealing with grief and grieving families, and if you don't acknowledge how you feel during these times, you can be putting yourself at a greater risk of stress and burnout.

At the Trust we know that peer and colleague support is often the greatest help that gets us through, along with the skills, knowledge and compassion of our teams of nurses and managers. The information in this booklet is designed to help support you and your colleagues' well-being in the event that a resident, customer, colleague or a loved one of a colleague dies.



Support for you

While you can never be truly prepared for loss and bereavement, having an understanding of the way you may be feeling will help you and others. Ask your Training and Development team to be put on the list for one of their Loss and Bereavement Training sessions.

Wendy Hodsdon has created a [video](#), which takes a holistic approach to grief and loss. While explaining the stages of loss she also describes how 'closure' in real life is not always a reality and that grief is a personal and constant process.

https://wearesmt.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/loss_and_bereavement_during_covid-19-360p.mp4

Sources of support and information

Colleagues can access our Employee Assistance Programme, which is a free 24-hour confidential service run by

Canada Life

0208 068 0035

wecare-cl.com

Access code: H30174

You can speak to your line manager, your local Pastoral Care Team, HR Business Partner or Colleague Engagement Manager

(see back page of this booklet).

There is also lots of useful information and guides on the Trust's well-being website

www.wearesmt.co.uk

You can use the government funded scheme called

Able Futures which provides support for mental health for a nine month period

www.able-futures.co.uk

Find Trust news and important information for colleagues on

Our Trust Hub

Quiet Rooms

Each of our villages has at least one quiet room that you can use as a safe and quiet space to spend some time if needed. During the current COVID-19 pandemic, the following rooms are available:



Cote Lane

The Crypt is accessible from the outside across the small lawn to the left of the Oatley House entrance. The code for the door is CY1925.



Monica Wills House

Various empty rooms at the moment including the lounge and staff room (while the conference room is being used as a staff area).



Sandford Station

Quiet Rooms at the Russets.

Ground Floor Meeting Room at Sherwood.

Staff rooms and meeting rooms are also available when not in use.



Westbury Fields

John Wills House lounges that are around the home and the meeting room at Sommerville. Colin Thompson's office is also available when not in use.



The Chocolate Quarter

Ground Floor Sanctuary and Lisa Loveridge's office, when not in use.

Memorial Ceremonies

Care teams and villages have embedded their own grief, bereavement and memorial ceremonies to celebrate the lives of past residents.

If there are restrictions on funerals and rituals (for example during lockdown) the pastoral care team will support the way teams and individuals grieve now and into the longer term.

The pastoral care team will ask for names of people to remember in their prayers, via the local manager and/or through methods appropriate to the situation.

Peer support

Team and colleague support is very important in working through grief. If a death occurs on your unit or department, your line manager or senior is encouraged to organise an informal peer support or debrief meeting. The Pastoral Care Lead and/or local HR Business Partner will help to facilitate the meeting, if required. Peer support is simply when people use their own experiences to help each other.

There is not normally a set agenda for a peer support meeting, but it must be conducted in a 'safe' and quiet space where you won't be interrupted. It's important that the individuals in the group feel accepted and understood and that everyone's experiences are equally important.

Stages of grief

The way we experience grief is unique to us as individuals. It's important you don't judge yourself or others for the way grief is being handled. It may help you to understand the five stages of grief commonly referred to, which are set out below. You may not necessarily go through them in this order, but understanding the stages will better equip us to cope with loss or bereavement.

Kubler-Ross's 5 stages of grief:

Stage	Interpretation
1. Denial	A conscious or unconscious refusal to accept facts, information, reality etc., relating to the situation concerned. A natural defence mechanism.
2. Anger	People dealing with emotional upset can be angry with themselves and/or with others, especially those close to them. Knowing this can help you to keep detached and non-judgemental when experiencing the anger of someone who is very upset.
3. Bargaining	Can involve bargaining with whatever God the person believes in. People can seek to negotiate a compromise when facing a loss. Eg; "can we still be friends?", in a break-up situation.
4. Depression	A sort of acceptance. It's natural to feel sadness and regret, fear and uncertainty. It shows that the person has at least begun to accept reality.
5. Acceptance	Where the person develops some emotional detachment and objectivity in accepting the loss as a reality.

Online support

“It is acceptable for you to take the time you need and remove any expectation of how you should be performing as you process your grief”

www.verywellmind.com/five-stages-of-grief-4175361

Our Trust Hub (www.ourtrusthub.co.uk) and our well-being website (www.wearesmt.co.uk) are frequently updated with information, videos and sources of support. See the back page of this booklet for Pastoral Care Team and People Directorate contact details.

You may find the following video useful for loss and bereavement:

Wendy Hodsdon, Pastoral and Community Well-being Lead, has created a shortened version of the Loss and Bereavement training into this twenty minute video, it includes helpful tips and knowledge around dealing with loss:

https://wearesmt.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/loss_and_bereavement_during_covid-19-360p.mp4



Helping with grief

When you're helping people with their bereavement, here are some important things to remember:

1. The physical context of communication is important:

Try and sit on the same level as the person and at a comfortable distance (not too close or too far) with no desks etc in between you.

Maintain good eye contact to show that you are listening.

2. Does the person want to talk?

They may not be in the mood. If you're not sure, ask and don't be offended if they don't want to at the moment.

3. Listen and show you are listening:

To listen properly think carefully about what the person is saying

Don't interrupt. Try not to anticipate what the person is going to say.

4. How can you encourage the person to talk?

Simple things like nodding or phrases such as, "yes I see" or, "tell me more" can help things keep going along if someone is feeling stressed.

You can also repeat some of the words you've heard or paraphrase back what the person has said to you - partly to check you've got it right and partly to show that you are listening.

5. Respecting silences and non-verbal communication:

If someone stops talking it may be that they are thinking of something painful. Wait with them for a moment and don't rush them.

Don't be afraid to say nothing but stay close - maybe put an arm around the person if it's something they find comforting.



6. Describing your own feelings:

It's OK to say things like, "I find this very difficult to talk about" or, "I'm not very good at talking about..." - describing your emotions is valuable.

7. Making sure you have understood:

Misunderstandings can happen if you make assumptions. You can ask questions to check that you have understood.

8. Avoiding giving advice too early:

Ideally, don't give advice unless it's asked for, if you give advice too early it can stop the conversation.

9. The importance of encouraging reminiscence:

Many people want to share reminiscences whether they are young or old. It may also help to remember how they have coped with previous set backs and understand how they can draw on their previous coping abilities.

10. The value of humour:

Humour serves an important function in our way of coping with major threats and fears-it allows us to rid ourselves of intense feelings whilst putting things into perspective. Humour is one of the ways that humans deal with things that at first seem impossible to deal with.

If someone wants to use humour to help them cope then you should encourage this but avoid trying to cheer them up with a supply of your own jokes.

Pastoral care

Monica Wills House and Garden House

The Chocolate Quarter

lisa.loveridge@stmonicastrust.org.uk

Sandford Station

christine.ramshaw@stmonicastrust.org.uk

Westbury Fields

colin.thompson@stmonicastrust.org.uk

Henleaze Road and Cote Lane

HR Business Partners

[Clare Gorvett](#)

HR Business Partner for John Wills House, Charterhouse, Russets/Sherwood, Care and Support and Domiciliary Care.

[Wendy O'Brien](#)

HR Business Partner for Residential Property & Development (Village catering, porters and housekeeping)

[Carol Waller](#)

HR Business Partner for Garden House, Charitable Impact, Care Quality, Finance and Digital Transformation and Marketing

[Naomi Stone](#): Reward and Engagement Manager (reward, engagement, well-being)

Websites

Cruse As well as providing free care to all bereaved people, the charity also offers information, support and training services.

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/>

Macmillan Cancer Support has useful resources, including information on bereavement that can be downloaded.

<https://www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/supporting-someone/coping-with-bereavement>

Our Trust Hub
