



AFTERCARE



# The Funeral People

From traditional service to modern celebration

For just over 190 years, A. B. Walker & Son has been serving the needs of generations of bereaved families throughout Berkshire and Oxfordshire. Still very much an independent family business, currently under the stewardship of the fifth generation, A. B. Walker proactively lead in the provision of providing bereavement support to the community we serve.

For generations, those who have suffered a bereavement have been encouraged to retain a dignified silence and follow social protocols that ignore their wellbeing. In the past, for those who have needed assistance in understanding their new situation, there has not been much help available outside of family and friends. Our service does not end immediately after the funeral, but continues afterwards particularly through the difficult months ahead.

We are proud of what we have achieved with our after care service; we don't pretend to make things better but we do strive to make things easier. We have deliberately aimed to make access to help absolutely free to all and this booklet outlines how we might help.

Losing a loved one, regardless of age can be one of life's most difficult experiences. We understand that each person's experience is unique, and we expect the response to loss to be unique.



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Grief is a natural response that we all react to in our own way.

There is no quick fix but we have developed a series of options under the heading of Aftercare that will assist those that wish to be helped.

There are four opportunities we are currently offering to anyone in the communities that we serve, whether A. B. Walker were involved in assisting with the funeral or not:

- The Link Group Bereavement Course
- One-to-one bereavement counselling
- Visits, trips and social events through the Link Up group
- Annual Service of Remembrance

## **The Link Bereavement Care Course**

We have created in partnership with Cruse Bereavement Care (Thames Valley), a programme of six meetings delivered over six consecutive weeks, in the evening, that investigates the feelings and sharing the experiences of loss and bereavement.

Each group session is a mixture of learning and group interaction managed by trained facilitators. Groups are generally 6-12 people and the programme is hosted, with refreshments, in the Blyth Suite at the Reading Headquarters of A. B. Walker in Eldon Road. Parking is available.

Although there are huge benefits in sharing your experiences of loss with others, we recognise that it

would not necessarily suit everyone. Should you feel that a group programme is not for you then we are able to refer you to a professional one-to-one support.

### **Course outline**

Week 1 – Working as a group

Week 2 – Looking at what grief is and common feelings

Week 3 – Further exploration of feelings

Week 4 – The rollercoaster of emotions

Week 5 – Practical issues and challenges

Week 6 – Group endings and new beginnings

### **Invitation**

Two to three months after the funeral, the person named as our main contact will receive an invitation to attend. Naturally the invitation also extends to other members of the family who may need some support. There is a GP referral scheme and a process for self-referral; you do not need to have been a client of A. B. Walker in order to qualify for the course.

### **Enrolment**

Please complete the form given with this brochure and return to A. B. Walker & Son. A member of the A. B. Walker Bereavement Team will contact you by telephone to assess your suitability for the group. Following this, we will contact you to offer you a place on the next available

course. In order to bring the benefits to as many people as possible and personally gain the most from the course, we would request that all attendees fully commit to the whole six week programme. There are courses running throughout the year.

## One-to-One Bereavement Counselling

We can offer individual meetings for those that may find joining a group a difficulty.

Each applicant will be required to complete a short telephone review in order to identify the focus of care that may then take place.



## What People Say

### Jackie's story

When Jackie went along to a Link Bereavement Care course she had recently been widowed for the second time.

Her first husband Ernesto died after 37 years of marriage. She married again and had been married for less than three years when her second husband Steve died too.

“It doesn't get any easier the second time”, she says. “But you do know a bit more about what forms need filling in.”

“Steve and I were looking forward to a long and happy retirement. We had everything to look forward to”, she recalls. “I was missing him dearly.” She went along to the course out of curiosity.

“I was touched that I had been invited”, she says.

Jackie found that the course helped her. “Everyone was so caring and friendly, they went out of their way to make you feel welcome”, she recalls. “It was reassuring to listen to other people's stories and their experiences.”

After attending the course, Jackie started the Link Up social group and is now its co-ordinator. The group meet regularly for dinner. She says it has helped to give her another purpose again.

“I have met very interesting people”, she says.

“Sometimes you can give advice or you take advice from someone else. Occasionally we have a few tears. No-one bats an eyelid – we are all in the same boat.” When she hears the group laughing she is ‘absolutely delighted’.

## Trudy's story

"My mum and dad died within three months of each other. Dad was 70 when he died as a result of a brain tumour and then my 64 year-old mum caught a virus and died too. It was so quick, it felt unreal.

I'm an only child and my mum and dad were my life. Christmas, birthdays, Easter, they would stay at my house. Mum looked after my little boy when I went to work.

I felt very lonely when they had gone, like I had been orphaned. It was unbearable. You think you can't cope, you just exist, and you are in the pits of despair.

Going on the Link Bereavement Course really helped. I met new people, everybody listened, and we all shared sorrow and loss. It made me feel better. I think it's great, I really do."

## Carol's story

"I had been with my partner Jed for 20 years when he died, aged 51, as the result of a brain haemorrhage. It was very sad and there was a big void in my life after he died, I loved him so much.

Just before I went on the Link Bereavement Course I wasn't sleeping, I had no concentration and I was bursting into tears. His death was on my mind from the minute I opened my eyes to the minute I went to bed.

I felt better after I went on the course. It was so sensitively run. You really felt you were being looked after. Every week I came away buzzing. I really enjoyed meeting people who were in the same situation. We were

all very respectful to each other and wanted to listen to the other people in the group. I found that really supportive.

Our last night together as a group was very special. It was a beautiful evening, a lovely sunset. We stood by the river and let off balloons. I watched them going up into the air and over the trees. I will never forget that moment.

I would definitely recommend the course to other people."

## Link Up Social Group and Activities

Many of those who have attended The Link have maintained contact and meet locally for supper or lunch. We also arrange a summer and winter coach trip to somewhere of interest (recently Winchester and Bath) and also hosted walks of variable distances that enable people to meet as individuals or attend as a family.

For some of these events there may be a charge to cover the cost of the transport.





## Annual Service of Remembrance

Each year we organise a service of remembrance, usually held in the Spring. Anyone of any religion or none is welcome to join us to share in this moment of reflection. You will find details of our annual memorial service on our website.

## Bereavement Resources

Bereavement Advice Centre  
[www.bereavementadvice.org](http://www.bereavementadvice.org) (0800 634 9494)

Cruse Bereavement Care  
[www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)

Samaritans  
[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

Open to Hope  
[www.opentohope.com](http://www.opentohope.com)

U3A  
[www.u3a.org.uk](http://www.u3a.org.uk)

PAPYRUS Prevention of Young Suicide  
[www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)

Support After Suicide Partnership  
[www.supportaftersuicide.org.uk](http://www.supportaftersuicide.org.uk)



## FAQs

### Who can attend?

Anyone who has been bereaved and feels they need some help. Our main contact will receive an invitation to attend. Naturally the invitation also extends to the other members of the family also who may need support. You also do not need to have been a client of A. B. Walker in order to qualify too.

### How do I enrol?

Please complete the form given with this brochure and return to A. B. Walker & Son. A member of the A. B. Walker Bereavement Team will contact you by telephone to assess your suitability for the group.

### What if I can't commit to the six week course?

In order to bring benefits and to personally gain the most from the course, we would request that all attendees fully commit to the whole six week programme. Therefore, we would offer you a course that you are able to attend for this duration, as we have courses running throughout the year.

### What can I expect?

You can expect a safe, confidential and respectful environment in which to share your experiences.

### How much does it cost?

The cost of the course is completely free to everybody and we have deliberately aimed to make it accessible to help everyone.

### What if it's not right for me?

Should you feel that a group programme is not for you, then we are able to refer you to a professional for one-to-one support.

### What happens after the course has finished?

If you wish, and with your permission, your details will be passed onto our Link Up Social Group Co-ordinators, who will contact you with details of their next day and evening meetings by email.



We are an independent funeral directors with branches across Berkshire and South Oxfordshire. Founded in 1826, we are one of the oldest family businesses in Berkshire and remain family owned and operated today. We are proud of our heritage and use the experience and knowledge this has given us to serve you and our local community.

Our compassionate and professional team are there to help you with all aspects related to a funeral. From pre-planning, to arranging the funeral itself, to bereavement aftercare and even monumental masonry and memorialisation, we offer choice and flexibility so we can deliver the right options for you. We are committed to providing high standards of service, showing care and respect in all we do.

Recognising that needs change, we believe it's important to innovate. In 2010 we created MemoryGiving.com to allow families and friends to make in-memory donations and leave messages online. To date we have helped collect over £14m for charities, and enabled charities to receive a further £2.5m through Gift Aid as well as connect donor messages of support to nearly 80,000 bereaved families.

Continuing to look forward we are committed to being carbon neutral by 2026, our 200th business anniversary. As a generation that considers themselves custodians of both a business and a planet, we wish to lead efforts to deliver funeral services that are environmentally sustainable, and we now measure the impact of all that we do. Current investments include the introduction of electric cars and use of solar energy.



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