

## Loss of a Parent

The death of a parent can be a shocking and a life-changing experience. This is as true for adults as it is for children and young people. Adults, however, are expected to be able to cope, to get on with their life and to take things in their stride.

The reality can be quite different.

No matter what age you are, you are always your parent's child. Whether or not your relationship was close or difficult, parents are a reference point – one of the ways in which we define our sense of self and our place in the world.

Although it is in the natural order of things to expect our parents to die before ourselves, lots of people are surprised by the intricacy and extent of their grief when this happens.

When we lose a parent, we may suddenly feel stranded, even though we are adults with our own lives and families, these feelings can sometimes be put to one side whilst you are living each day as you normally would.

When a parent dies, this can also bring about feelings of certainty of our own death, as though you are the next in line. Now we are the older generation, this can be stressful on its own. It can be uncomfortable to face the thoughts of our own mortality, which are normally hidden by everyday life.

Whilst a death within the family, can bring us closer together, it can also create a lot of tension and stress within families too, and may bring up old conflicts between siblings. Some families can support each other, but there may also be relatives who are unwilling to share their emotions and prefer to be alone. Partner relationships can also be affected. As with all grief, there is no one defined way to grieve.

If one parent has died, then our relationship with the other parent may alter. This is particularly so, if we had always thought of our parents as one couple, we now find ourselves seeing our other parent as a separate person. We may also be upset if the remaining parent wants to start a new relationship.

If we were caring for that parent before they died, our role will disappear, this may come with relief, but may also cause some anxiety and a sense of separation.

### How to help

- Talking with friends and family about your feelings
- Gaining an understanding of your own feelings
- Getting advice on practical issues