

Grief and Loss during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Grieving is a unique and individual experience; there's no right or wrong way to grieve. The pain of loss can feel overwhelming. You may experience many difficult and unexpected emotions ranging from shock and disbelief to anger, guilt, relief or profound sadness. The pain of grief can disrupt your own health, making it difficult to sleep, eat, or even function. These are all normal reactions to loss - the more significant the loss, the more intense your grief will be. Coping with the loss of someone you love is one of life's biggest challenges.

Dealing with loss at this time

Right now, when the entire world is in a suspended state of loss for our 'old world' your personal grief might feel more intense or more difficult to deal with - this is normal. We don't have much to compare it to, except perhaps, the grief experienced during natural disasters or war. Loss at this time also comes amid economic uncertainty and may impact those already experiencing unemployment and disconnection from families, friends and usual routines.

For those who experience the loss of a loved one during this time, the impact can feel particularly cruel. Right now, fears of infection are interfering with families' ability to mourn. As a result of social distancing measures and strict infection controls in hospitals and nursing/care homes we may not have the opportunity to say goodbye to a loved one as we may have done in 'normal' times.

Planning the funeral/burial

Funerals are a significant part of the grieving process in Ireland. The normal rituals around funerals and burials have changed dramatically due to the current COVID-19 crisis. Without the comfort of close family and friends attending the funeral and burial our grief can be magnified. Making important decisions around the funeral and burial can be more daunting without the familiarity of traditional rituals. Live streaming of the funeral can enable those who can't be present to participate in the ceremony. The following publication may be of help to you in planning your loved one's funeral and burial.

A Guide for the Bereaved during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Ways of supporting those who are bereaved at this time

At the present time we are unable to reach out to those who are bereaved in ways that are familiar to us. The loneliness experienced after a death can be compounded due to the necessary COVID-19 restrictions currently in place. There are many creative ways in which we can support those who are bereaved at this time;

- Write and send a poem to the bereaved person/family
- Send your personal memories of the deceased to the bereaved person/family
- Send your condolences on www.rip.ie
- Plant flowers/a tree in memory of the deceased and send a photo to the bereaved family

Bereavement supports

COVID-19 will leave behind a complicated form of grief that we will all hold onto for some time — it will impact us long after the current controls are lifted. There are supports you can access to help you as you grieve;

- [CSEAS COVID-19 Bereavement support webpage](#)
- www.irishhospicefoundation.ie

Discussing our final wishes with our loved ones

Perhaps now is a time to consider having the difficult conversation around illness and death. This is never easy, but we must remember that talking about it doesn't mean that it will happen. If it does, knowing what a loved one wanted will bring focus and peace. Having this conversation is often less upsetting than not having it at all. Completion of the [CSEAS Personal Affairs Checklist](#) might form part of this conversation.

On-going support from the CSEAS

Remember, the **CSEAS** is available to support you in your bereavement. Our extended operational hours on our central helpdesk **Ph. 0761 000 030** are: **Mon – Fri (9am – 8pm) Sat & Sun (12 noon – 4pm)**. You might like to visit our website www.cseas.per.gov.ie

“Give sorrow words; the grief that does not speak knits up the o-er wrought heart and bids it break.”

- William Shakespeare

