

 Manchester Grief Coach

The First Few Months

What grief does, what tends to help,
and when to ask for more.

A short guide from Steve at Manchester Grief Coach

Nobody hands you anything useful when someone dies. You get sympathy cards, a great deal of admin, and a lot of people saying "let me know if there's anything I can do." Underneath all of it you are somehow supposed to work out how to carry on.

This is the plain version. It is not therapy and it will not fix anything, because nothing fixes this. It is what grief tends to do to people in the first few months, a few things that genuinely help, and the point at which you should stop reading guides like this one and talk to your GP instead.

It will take about five minutes to read. You do not have to read it all today.

Most of what is happening to you is normal

The thing people are least prepared for is how physical it is. Grief is not only sadness. It shows up as exhaustion that sleep does not touch, appetite that disappears or doubles, a chest that feels tight for no reason, and a memory that has stopped working properly. People lose words mid sentence. People drive somewhere and cannot remember the journey. If you have been quietly wondering whether something is medically wrong with you, that is worth a GP visit to rule things out, but for a lot of people this is grief doing what grief does.

The other surprise is the swinging. You will be in it, properly in it, and then twenty minutes later you will be laughing at something on the telly, and then you will feel terrible for laughing. That back and forth is not you handling it badly. Researchers who study bereavement describe it as moving between the loss itself and the business of getting on with life, and the moving between the two is the process, not a failure of it. You are supposed to come up for air. Coming up for air is not forgetting.

Then there are the waves. Weeks can pass where you think you have found some footing, and then a song, or a smell, or someone's handwriting on an old birthday card takes your legs out. This carries on for a long time. It does not mean you are back at the start.

The things that catch people out

Other people say the wrong thing, constantly. They tell you they are in a better place, or that time heals, or that you are being so strong. Most of them mean well and have no idea what to say. Some people you expected to show up will vanish, which hurts more than the clumsy comments. Other people, often ones you barely knew, will turn out to be quietly excellent.

You will get angry at things that do not deserve it. The bank, the paperwork, a friend who forgot. Anger is part of this and it usually is not really about the bank.

You may find you feel relief, particularly if the death followed a long illness or a difficult relationship, and then feel guilty about the relief. Both things can be true at once. Nothing has gone wrong with you.

And at some point somebody will ask how you are and you will say "fine" because the real answer takes too long.

A few things that actually help

Not a programme, just what tends to work.

Eat something and drink water, even when you do not want to. Grief burns through you and low blood sugar makes everything feel worse than it is. Sleep will probably be bad for a while, so lower the bar: rest counts, even without sleep.

Say the person's name out loud, and let other people say it. A lot of families stop mentioning the person who died because they are frightened of upsetting each other, and everyone ends up lonelier for it.

Find the one person you can be honest with. Not five. One. The friend who can sit with you being a mess without trying to talk you out of it is worth more than a dozen people asking if you are okay.

Do the admin in small pieces, and let someone else do some of it. There is a lot of it, it is relentlessly bureaucratic, and it arrives at the worst possible moment.

Be careful with alcohol. It is the most available thing in the house and it makes the middle of the night much worse.

Lower your expectations of yourself for a while. Not forever. Just for now.

When it is more than this, and what to do

Coaching, guides, friends and time are not the right answer for everything. Some things need clinical help, and asking for it is not an escalation or an admission of anything.

Please talk to your GP if you are having thoughts of not wanting to be here, or of harming yourself. Do that today rather than at some point. If you are leaning on alcohol or drugs to get through the days in a way that feels out of your control, if you have not been eating or sleeping for a long stretch, or if you cannot work or look after the people who depend on you, that is also a GP conversation.

The same applies if you were already living with depression, anxiety or PTSD before this happened, or if this loss has dragged an older one back up with it.

And if months are going by and the grief feels completely unchanged, as though it has frozen rather than shifted, that is worth an assessment too. Where intense grief keeps disrupting daily life well beyond six months, it can be something called Prolonged Grief Disorder, which is a recognised condition with proper treatment behind it. Your GP is the person to ask.

If you are in crisis right now, Samaritans are free to call on [116 123](tel:116123), any time of day or night. For urgent medical help call **NHS 111**, and in an emergency call **999**.

Where coaching fits, if it fits at all

I am a grief coach, not a counsellor or a therapist. That means I do not diagnose anything, I do not treat mental illness, and I am not a replacement for your GP. What I do is more practical: helping people understand what grief is doing to them and build things they can actually use.

If you are reading this in the first few weeks, coaching is probably not what you need yet. Most people find that a few months is about when they have the capacity for something structured. Before that there is usually too much admin, too much fog, and too many people in the house. There is no rush and no right time, and waiting is not falling behind.

When you are ready, I run a six week course called **Life After Loss**, for adults working through a bereavement. It runs online, either in a small group of about ten people or one to one. Six sessions, an hour each, one a week. If it turns out that what you need is clinical support instead, I will say so plainly and help you work out where to go.

You can find all of it, including what it costs, at manchestergriefcoach.com. There is no pressure to do anything with this guide except read it.

If you would rather just talk it through with someone first, that is free and there is nothing to decide at the end of it.

[Book a free, no-pressure chat](#)

Take care of yourself this week. That is genuinely the whole job for now.

Steve

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