

Life After Caring

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Life After Caring



Life after Caring

One day, you may find yourself no longer caring for your relative, friend or child quite as much, or in the same way as before. Maybe someone else is now sharing the caring with you, or the person you care for has (perhaps) gone to live in a care home. You may be coping with the death of your friend or relative and having to adjust to not being a carer.

There may be feelings of relief at being able to rest for a while, or you may feel at loss about how much time you now have on your hands. You may also be experiencing feelings of guilt, regret and sadness. These are normal reactions to major change or loss. Please see the list of practical tips later in this section.

This section also suggests a few options you could explore to help rebuild your life, and includes some tips on bereavement, which you might find helpful.

Just as no two caring situations are the same, so your experience of adjusting to change and loss will be unique. This is bound to be shaped by your circumstances, who you have cared for, for how long and why, how much choice and control you had along the way and whether you had help and support.

You may be left to deal with practical things like returning equipment, sorting through personal belongings and attending to correspondence with the bank, benefits agency and others. Try to give yourself as much time as possible to deal with these things.

Unfortunately, there may be some things, which need your attention urgently such as your housing and / or financial situation.

You may find other carers, ex-carers or a carer's support group can offer you continued or new understanding and support for as long as you need it. Pembrokeshire Carers Outreach provide support to former carers, and can be contacted on 01437 767762

Your knowledge and experience of caring could be helpful to others who are, or are thinking of becoming, carers. For instance, you could share your experiences with individuals, in a group, write about them for a newsletter or pass on your skills in training sessions.

Alternatively, your expertise could be very valuable to many projects looking for volunteers or employers like Social Care & Housing, if continuing to use your caring skills is what you wish to do. Many carers become trustees of voluntary organisations. Not only do they provide a valuable insight into the role of a carer but also bring additional skills to the project.

On the other hand, you may want to have a complete break from caring responsibilities and simply rest and build up your friendships or your confidence. You could do this in several ways, for example:

- by taking up a new hobby, sport or other leisure activity;
- by volunteering;
- by finding out about local training, study and employment opportunities.

See Section 3, Taking a Break or Section 6, Carers & Work

The Future - After Bereavement

There will, as stated earlier, be a time of grieving but a time will come when you will want to consider ways in which you can help yourself to begin to re-shape your own life.

Here are some ideas that other bereaved people have found helpful when they feel strong enough.

Keeping Up or Renewing Contacts

- write to or ring relatives and friends frequently;
- try to plan ahead and have something in your diary for the coming month;
- write your memoirs or keep a diary. This can help to gauge your progress through grief;
- invite friends or neighbours in for a coffee or tea or suggest a shopping trip together;
- think about a pet for companionship;
- think about a holiday.

Practical Tips

- do express your emotions;
- allow yourself to grieve;
- remember that grief has to run its course. It cannot be hurried or avoided;
- accept help from others, but don't let people persuade you into doing things that do not feel right, or before you feel ready;
- take things one day at a time when you're feeling low;
- talk about what has happened to family or close friends;
- don't neglect yourself - take care of yourself and eat and rest regularly;
- see your doctor if you have any health concerns;

- don't enter into financial agreements you don't understand.
- think carefully before you make any big decisions during the first year after bereavement;
- try not to turn to drugs or alcohol or smoke to excess;
- call one of the help lines listed in the contact sheets if you feel you need to talk through any difficulties.

Cruse publishes a very helpful leaflet entitled 'After the Death of Someone Very Close'. Please see the contact section for details.

What to Do When Someone Dies

Not many of us wish to think about when someone close to us will die. It may not be until a serious illness strikes or an accident happens that we have to face up to this fact.

There is detailed information in Leaflet D49 'What to do after a death in England and Wales' and also a leaflet entitled 'New Bereavement Benefits' issued by the Benefits Agency.

For many carers the end of their caring task comes about with the death of the person they care for. Feelings of grief and loss affect different people in different ways but there are some common patterns in the different stages people go through, for example: shock and disbelief, depression and apathy, expressions of grief are signs of recovery. Try not to be influenced by others telling you how to feel or behave.

Many people find that some of the best ways to help overcome all these feelings is to talk about them to other people, in particular, someone who is, or has been, in a similar position themselves. It may be that you would benefit from finding a carers support group in the area (please see contact section). If you have regular contact with a Nurse or Social Worker they will be able to support and guide you at this difficult time.

You may wish to consider professional counselling of some sort. Seeing a counsellor does not mean that there is something wrong with you, but it can help you to talk over feelings and generally help you feel more able to cope. There are a small number of voluntary agencies and private practitioners offering counselling. See the contact page for details of local contacts providing a counselling service.

Practical Tips:

- The death of a partner, close relative or friend may not only affect us emotionally but practically and financially as well. A small amount of pre-planning can save months of anxiety.
- It is important that you try and discuss these things with the person you care for if appropriate. (See Section 9 - Legal Matters)
- Check whether the person left a will or a living will.

When Death Occurs

If the death occurs at home the doctor is the first person to contact. If the cause of death is clear and has been expected s/he would be able to give you a Medical Certificate showing the cause of death. If there is to be a cremation, two doctors need to sign the certificate.

If the death is sudden, or the cause uncertain, there will need to be a post mortem and the nearest relative will be asked to agree to this. In certain cases the doctor will need to report the death to a Coroner. In these circumstances, the deceased will be removed by a funeral director to the local district hospital where an autopsy will be carried out establish the cause of death. The Coroner will then issue the death certificate.

How To Register the Death

Once a Medical Certificate has been issued, you will need to take it the Registrar's Office to register the deceased's death. This must be done within 5 days.

Wherever the death occurs - in hospital or at home - it must be registered with the Registrar of Births and Deaths.

The name and address of the registrar will be on the envelope containing the medical certificate but it can also be found under ® for Registrations, Deaths and Marriages, in the Yellow Pages. Alternatively, your local Citizens Advice Bureau, hospital, doctor, council, or police station should be able to help.

Check the times the Registrar is available before making a journey. They are often busy so there may be a queue.

The Registrar will need to know the following about the deceased person:

- date and place of birth;
- date and place of death;
- maiden name if a married woman;
- former occupation.

The Registrar will also ask for the medical certificates and the deceased's NHS medical card. If you cannot find this **DON'T WORRY**, just explain to the Registrar.

The Registrar will then give you a green certificate, which should be handed to the funeral director.

You will also be given a copy of the Death Certificate which you may need to send to the Benefits Agency with any pension or allowance books. You may need to think about extra copies (there is a small charge for each) as these will probably be needed when dealing with insurance policies, work pensions etc.

You may need to ask the Registrar for a leaflet explaining how to obtain 'Probate' if there is a Will or 'Letters of Administration' if there is not. These may not be required but if, for instance, the house were to be sold it would be needed.

How To Arrange a Funeral

Many people have an idea of the sort of funeral they want and it is advisable, if possible, to discuss this with the person you are caring for.

The Funeral Service

Funerals have to be arranged very quickly and it is helpful if you know what the person you care for wants at their funeral.

- whether they want to be buried or cremated;
- the type of service they wish to have - religious or non-religious;
- the hymns, music or readings they would like;
- what they want to be dressed in;
- the sort of memorial they would like.

Even if you have no regular contact with any of the local churches they could still be a source of advice and support.

Below are a few organisations that may be of help when planning a funeral.

The Natural Death Centre is a charity with the overall aim of helping to improve the quality of dying. It campaigns for more support for people who wish to die at home and can help people draw up 'living wills' to restrict the amount of medical intervention if a person should become terminally ill. They can put people in touch with counsellors or funeral directors who will conduct particular types of funerals and can advise on arranging a funeral without a funeral director.

The Cremation Society provides information about all aspects of cremation. They offer a booklet called 'What You Should Know About Cremation' which gives information on where to go and what to do.

Staff at local cemeteries and crematoria will be able to give first hand advice on the options available to the bereaved, particularly in respect of memorialisation. They will also be able to offer advice on the procedures, which normally are followed at the funeral, and the viability of any special requests you might have.

Not everyone wants a religious ceremony. For more information on an alternative service, contact The British Humanist Association. They publish a guide called 'Funerals Without God - a Practical Guide to Non Religious Funerals' which gives ideas on how to conduct a service, readings etc. They will also provide someone to officiate at such ceremonies, if required.

Paying For a Funeral

If you want a more conventional funeral and you want it arranged by a funeral director, it is a good idea to get at least two estimates to compare.

The 'basic' cost of a funeral usually includes a hearse, a coffin, removal of the body and the funeral director's fees. Then depending on the type of funeral, you can expect to pay fees for the crematorium, doctor, minister, organist and church, as well as the cost of flowers, cars and notices in the local paper. In the case of a sudden death there may also be costs relating to the post-mortem. A fairly basic funeral would probably be from £1,200 upwards.

Those funeral directors who are members of the National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD) will give you a price on request and will not exceed any written estimate given to you without your permission. They can also provide information and advice on all aspects of the funeral arrangements.

The NAFD publishes a code of practice on funerals. Should you have reason to complain about the service you receive from a funeral director, this sets down the four stages for carrying through a complaint.

The funeral director may be able to suggest ways of finding the money for a funeral from the deceased person's estate or paying by instalments, so it is a good idea to discuss your financial situation with them.

You may also get help from the Benefit Agency Social Fund. This comes in the form of a funeral payment, which will have to be paid back from the estate of the deceased (if possible). It covers a simple funeral and must be claimed for within three months. Contact your local Benefits Agency for more details.

Whoever undertakes to arrange the funeral is responsible for paying the costs. So be careful if you are taking on this responsibility and seek advice from a Citizens Advice Bureau or a solicitor.

It may be that you would like to pay in advance for a funeral plan to avoid the stress that the expense can cause at the actual time of bereavement.

Some insurance companies run schemes that enable you to do this. Age Concern have set up an independent company called Dignity which offers three levels of funeral arrangements to suit your budget and personal preference.

Some funeral directors, including members of NAFD, allow for payment in advance through monthly insurance premiums (maximum age 75). Look for a funeral director (undertaker) who is a member of the NAFD (in Yellow Pages) and ask them about the scheme. However, be aware that the Office of Fair Trading has issued a critical report on the pre-paid funeral industry. You need to be sure that your money is safe if, for example, the funeral director goes out of business or is taken over by another company. Which? the monthly magazine produced by the Consumers Association, has produced a number of reports on the funeral industry. Your local library will have indexed back copies.

Section 7 - Contacts Details

British Humanist Association

1 Gower Street
London WC1E 6HD

☎ 020 7079 3580
Fax: 020 7079 3588
Email: info@humanism.org.uk

Citizens Advice Bureaux

19 Cartlett
Haverfordwest

☎ 0845 1202939

10 Meyrick Street,
Pembroke Dock

☎ (01646) 683805

Compassionate Friends

If you have lost a child of any age.

7 days a week 10.00am - 4.00pm and 6.30pm - 10.30pm

☎ 0845 232304

COUNSELLING SERVICES

Cruse Bereavement Care

A national charity providing counselling, information, and support for those suffering from bereavement.

Pembrokeshire Cruse : ☎ (01437) 891006 7.00-9.00pm

Cruse Cymru Bereavement Line: ☎ (0870) 1671677

Cruse Cymru: ☎ (02920) 886913

Pembrokeshire Counselling Service

Voluntary and confidential counselling service throughout Pembrokeshire

☎ (01437) 541325

Relate Mid and West Wales

A confidential counselling service who people who have difficulties or anxieties in their marriage or adult relationship

Ty Merthyr

Little Water Street

Carmarthen SA31 1ER

☎ (01267) 236737

The Samaritans

Listening ear in confidence to anyone in distress

1 Albert Street

Haverfordwest SA61 1TA

☎ (08457) 909090

Cremation Society

Brecon House

Albion Place

Maidstone ME14 5DZ

☎ (01622) 688292/3

Disability Law Service

They publish a free booklet called 'Guidelines for Wills and Trusts', they will also give advice over the telephone or by letter.

Monday - Friday 10.00am to 1.00pm - 2.00pm to 5.00pm

39-45 Cavell Street

London E1 2BP

☎ (0207) 7919800

Fax: 0207 7919802

Minicom: 0207 7919801

E-mail: advice@dls.org.uk

Natural Death Centre

Offers information on woodland burials, cardboard coffins, living wills and looking after someone dying at home. A handbook is available for a charge.

6 Blackstock Mews

Blackstock Road

London N4 2BT

☎ 0871 288 2098

E-mail: ndc@alberyfoundation.org