

Cruse Bereavement Care



Anniversaries and reminders when you are bereaved

There are many events that will evoke memories of the death of someone close. Some are personal and obvious, such as a wedding anniversary or birthday, and others are more unpredictable, like a piece of music, a smell or a particular TV programme.

Anniversaries and reminders can evoke powerful memories and feelings which are distinctly personal. These days or events, which mean so much to one person, may be ordinary to others who may not understand what is happening.

Just as each relationship and each bereavement is unique, so too are the feelings evoked by reminders. For some people, anniversaries can evoke fond and happy memories, while for others they can create feelings of sadness, grief, fear, regret and anger. Another disturbing feeling that can be evoked by a reminder is guilt - guilt at what has been said or done, guilt concerning what was left unsaid, and even guilt at having forgotten or not thought about the dead person for a period of time.

What can help?

It helps to accept that, when grieving, there are some occasions which will be very difficult and then to work out how best to manage them. Spend some time trying to work out, well in advance, which arrangements will best sit your needs and the needs of others who share your loss.

Some people try to avoid the pain of certain events by making sure they are away from the people and places which bring sad thoughts and memories. But you may feel it is important to mark the day in a way that is special for you and for the person who has died and whose loss you mourn. What is important is that what you do will have some special private meaning for you and those close to you.

Some people find solace in religious and cultural practices which help individuals and groups remember the dead and celebrate their lives and work.

Others find they prefer something more personal, and others do nothing at all other than maintain routine and normal life.

The uncertainty and anxiety surrounding death may lead to fixed ideas and thinking, but it is important to remember that people remember and forget the dead in their own ways and what bereaved people need is acceptance from others.

As time passes, anniversaries and reminders can help us to begin to focus on happy memories of good times shared in the past.