

# Bereavement and grief

## Resources to help you cope



Coming to terms with the absence of a loved one is often difficult. This fact sheet explains the reactions that can come up. It also presents several resources to help you cope with them.

### What is bereavement?

Bereavement is grief over the death of a loved one. Grief is a human experience that occurs in response to a significant loss: the loss of a loved one, a pet, or a physical ability, for example. It's our way of adapting to it. Each person experiences the grief of bereavement in their own way, depending on their situation, experiences, etc.

### Are there stages to go through?

- There are different theories on this. The most well-known divides grief into 5 stages:
- **Denial:** Refusing to believe we have lost a loved one.
  - **Anger:** Feeling distressed by the loss. This can be expressed aggressively. We might be irritable, telling ourselves "it's totally unfair!"
  - **Bargaining:** We try to negotiate with the situation. We might feel guilty and think, "if only I had been there", or "if I had just done such-and-such", the death wouldn't have happened.
  - **Depression:** We experience deep sadness. Often, we isolate ourselves and feel empty. This is usually the longest and hardest phase.
  - **Acceptance:** We resign ourselves to the loss. Our energy returns and we regain our taste for life.

This list is just a guide. Remember, each person grieves in their own way. Many emotions can arise, sometimes all at the same time, or in a different order than shown here.



**Grief is a journey that requires time, and most of all, kindness towards yourself.**

### How long will I feel this sadness?

Each person has their own rhythm. The sadness will ease gradually over time. Studies tell us that it never goes away completely: you learn to live with it. Sometimes you have to recreate your daily routines, your family life, your projects, etc. Give yourself time to take care of yourself without setting any deadlines.





## How will I live without him, or without her?

Bereaved persons often ask this question. We encourage you to:

- take one moment at a time
- be patient
- give yourself permission to express your emotions
- talk about the deceased person with trusted family and friends
- surround yourself with people who are good for you



### Advice to family and friends

To help the person who is grieving:

- Ask how they're doing.
- Let them talk about the deceased and express their emotions.
- Be present for them, and listen.
- Be sensitive in what you say: for example, avoid saying "be strong" or "try to move on".

## Can rituals help me?

Some people find comfort in rituals, such as songs or prayers. These are concrete gestures that have symbolic value.

Whether done alone or in a group, rituals can help ease suffering and gradually restore a sense of peace.

## Do I need support?

No matter how people experience bereavement, they may feel the need for support. If this is your case, support is available (see the Appendix on page 3).

The following reactions are common after the death of a loved one:

- loss of appetite
- difficulty sleeping
- feeling angry, sad, etc.
- preferring to be alone, no longer wanting to go out and have fun

However, don't put off getting help if you have:

- a loss of self-esteem
- negative thoughts or actions against yourself, such as judging yourself harshly or not wanting to take care of yourself
- suicidal thoughts

In the Appendix, you will find possible sources of support.



### USEFUL RESOURCES

Other health sheets published by the CHUM are available. Ask for those that might fit your situation.



You can also find them on our website [chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante](http://chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante)

*The content of this document in no way replaces the recommendations and diagnoses made, or the treatment suggested by your health professional.*

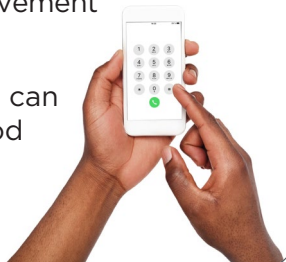
To find out more about the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal [chumontreal.qc.ca](http://chumontreal.qc.ca)

Several sources of support are available for people going through bereavement. It's important to find the one that best suits your needs.

### Types of support

- > Help lines
- > Support groups
- > Individual meetings with a volunteer, a psychologist, or other professional trained in grief support
- > Specialized websites providing information on bereavement
- > Books

Different organizations can guide you towards good resources.



### CHUM Volunteers

They offer support to families. They also have a support group for people mourning the loss of a loved one who had cancer and was treated at CHUM. To access this type of support, ask your care team or contact the Volunteer Service, at:

> **514 890-8000, ext. 11632**

### Tel-Aînés help line

This help line is intended for anyone experiencing bereavement in Québec who wants support and comfort. Free of charge, it's available between 10:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. every day of the year. (Service in French)

> **1 888 LE-DEUIL (1 888 533-3845)**

### Local community service centre (CLSC)

Psychologists, social workers, or nurses can provide support individually or in groups. To find your neighbourhood CLSC, click on the address below:

> [sante.gouv.qc.ca/en/repertoire-ressources/clsc](https://sante.gouv.qc.ca/en/repertoire-ressources/clsc)

### Ordre des psychologues du Québec

Depending on your needs and your means, the Ordre can help you find a psychologist in your area.

> **1 800 561-1223**

> [ordrepsy.qc.ca/english](https://ordrepsy.qc.ca/english)

### Fondation PalliAmi

This foundation offers volunteer support services for bereaved persons. You can contact the foundation in the weeks following the death of a loved one. (Service in French)

> **514 413-8777, ext. 27434**

> [palliami.org](https://palliami.org)

### Fondation Monbourquette

This organization can be useful to find a support group near you, or books or films about bereavement. Resources in French and English.

> [fondationmonbourquette.com/ressources-anglais](https://fondationmonbourquette.com/ressources-anglais)



### MyGrief.ca

This website was designed by families who have gone through bereavement and professionals working in this field. Information and support are provided across Canada.

> [mygrief.ca](http://mygrief.ca)

### MONTRÉAL AND SURROUNDING AREAS

These organizations support persons at the end of life. They also help families, including after the person's death.

#### Albatros-Montréal

Trained volunteers offer to accompany anyone in palliative care or at the end of life, as well as their loved ones. (Service in French)

> 514 255-5530

> [albatros-mtl.ca](http://albatros-mtl.ca)

#### Maison St-Raphaël

This organization provides palliative care in a home and a day centre. The care and services are intended for people with an incurable disease and their loved ones.

> 514 736-2001

> [maisonstaphael.org/en/](http://maisonstaphael.org/en/)

### The Palliative Home-care Society of Greater Montreal

Loved ones of persons who received services from this organization can obtain 5 to 6 sessions with a psychologist. Follow-up can be provided by a team (psychologist and volunteer).

> 514 272-7200

> [societedesoinspalliatifs.com/en/](http://societedesoinspalliatifs.com/en/)

### Carrefour le Moutier (Rive-Sud)

This service is available to anyone going through a difficult time or transition. Trained volunteers provide a listening service by phone or in person, as well as a personalized listening service ranging from 3 to 10 sessions. (Service in French)

> 450 679-7111

> [carrefourmoutier.org](http://carrefourmoutier.org)

### Maison Victor-Gadbois (Montréal)

Among the services offered, they provide support to adults and children who have lost a loved one to cancer. (Service in French)

> 450 467-1710

> [maisonvictor-gadbois.com](http://maisonvictor-gadbois.com)

Click on the tab "Soutien au deuil"

### BOOKS

*Vivre le deuil au jour le jour*, du Dr Christophe Fauré (2018). (French only)

*Bereavement*, by Biblio-Santé. This booklet offers suggestions for readings and films on bereavement.

> [bibliosante.ca/en/](http://bibliosante.ca/en/)

Click on Thematic Booklets → Bereavement

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