

Ways to Remember your loved ones

- Creating a memory box containing mementos of the person who has died, such as photographs, letters, poems or records of achievement
- Compiling a book about the person, including photographs, press cuttings and personal memories. This need not be formal, it can be a scrapbook or photo album with personal notes
- A memory box or book can be made by one person for their own use, or some families may like to create one jointly, Each member can be invited to make their own contribution. This can be kept in the family to show future generations
- Keeping a memento which brings back memories, perhaps something that is in regular use
- Having a memorial bench overlooking a favourite view, a sundial or piece of stained glass
- Planting a tree or shrub
- Making a donation to charity or some cause that played a part in the person's life, or becoming a volunteer or helper
- Funding a prize or award at a club, school or college

Whatever you decided to do it will be your way to keep the memory of your loved one with you always.

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Hold out a Hand and Help the Bereaved

Anniversaries and reminders when you are bereaved



**Hold out a Hand
And Help The Bereaved**

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 a birthday or the anniversary of the death itself. Other, more unpredictable, reminders may be a piece of music playing on the radio, a smell or a particular TV programme. Some reminders may not even be fully conscious. A place or even the type of weather may evoke feelings of anger, sadness or loneliness before it is realised that it has associations with the loss of a loved one.

Other people can be strong reminders of the person who has died. It is not unusual for a child to remind a parent of another dead child or of a lost partner.

Public events may trigger memories for a large number of people. The death of someone famous or publicity about disasters and traumatic deaths such as in a road accident, fire or a capsized boat can bring back painful images.

What happens

Anniversaries and reminders can bring out 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.

Each relationship and each bereavement is unique and special. The reminders can generate fond and happy memories, or a mood of solitary but comforting reflection. But they can also evoke sadness, grief, fear, regret and anger. It is not unusual at moments of connection with memory to become angry with others. 'How dare they be alive when the loved person is not?'

Some people find themselves distracted, unable to concentrate and agitated and others have conflicting feelings of sadness and relief. There is no 'right' way to feel and no time limit on experiencing the feelings. For many, reminders evoke strong feelings throughout their own lives.

Another disturbing feeling that can be evoked by a reminder is guilt; guilt at what was said or done, guilt concerning what was left unsaid and even guilt at having forgotten or not thought about the dead person for a long time.

What helps

It probably 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 suit your needs and the needs of those 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. If you feel like this you may decide, for example, to go on a course, go on holiday, go anywhere which has no special connections, and immerse yourself in fresh surroundings.

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.

Perhaps you feel that you want to make them a gift in the way that you used to, to tell them that you still love them and they are still part of your life.

You may decide to spend the time quietly with your thoughts and memories; you may perhaps go to the crematorium gardens or grave with a close friend or family, to give yourself a time and a place to be sad and talk about the person who has died.

Maybe afterwards you will feel like doing something else that holds memories which are dear to you; to go for a particular walk, sit in a certain corner of a pub, read a special book, listen to a particular piece of music, even have a party.

What is important is that what you do will have some special private meaning for you, and for 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.

The uncertainty and anxiety surrounding death may lead to fixed ideas and thinking, but Cruse has learnt 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 in the past, but if the painful images persist and they are disrupting your life or your sleep you should seek expert help.