



REACHING out to those in grief has been the bedrock of day-to-day life for Tovey Bros for more than 150 years, so it's heartening to report that our pioneering bereavement support group has now helped hundreds of people living in the Newport area.

James Tovey realised there was a need to help bereaved people beyond the formality of the funeral and launched STEPS (Supporting Those Experiencing Personal Sadness) in partnership with world-renowned grief expert Dr Bill Webster. Six years on from its inception, STEPS has gone from strength to strength and runs three times a year at Newport's Lysaght Institute.

"Initially it was families we had served who attended the course but it was always a strong principle of ours that STEPS was open to everyone who needed it," said James Tovey. "And as word spread, we were delighted that people who weren't previously known to us benefitted from the course, coming from further afield than ever to attend."

In a further turn of events, one of the first recruits to the STEPS training course, Natalie Howard, has also been



Natalie Howard

running the group since it was launched. As a former priest in the Church in Wales, death and the associated pain of loss has played an integral role in Natalie's work among both parishioners and the wider community over the past 20 years. So when the dual responsibility of looking after her elderly mother whilst helping out with young grandchildren made it difficult to devote herself full-time to her clergy role, Rev Nat, as she was formerly known, jumped at the opportunity to focus exclusively on grief counselling. An experienced volunteer, Natalie has now helped more than 200 local people struggling with unresolved grief.

"People who have lost loved ones tend to get supported in the time running up to the funeral but it's usually months or even years down the line that they can realise they haven't worked through the grieving process," she said. "I felt that I had a personal calling to actually listen to what grieving people were thinking and feeling. From my own personal experiences of bereavement, I felt I also had a certain level of empathy that would help and when I did some training with Bill Webster it all fell into place. Although that first training course was six years ago I'm still learning from the people who come through our doors."

Tovey Bros offers STEPS (free six-weekly support sessions), which meets several times a year at Newport's Lysaght Institute. The atmosphere is informal and attendees are welcome to bring a family member or friend for support. The next cohort starts on 25th February 2020 - anyone interested should contact Tovey Bros.

**To receive 'Consolo' via email please contact:
info@toveybros.co.uk**

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B E R E A V E M E N T S U P P O R T N E W S L E T T E R

CHRISTMAS. It can be such a joyful time, especially for those with young children, but it can also trigger trepidation in those of us who are grieving for lost loved ones. The message is clear and unequivocal – 'tis the season to be jolly – and everyone seems to be shopping for their loved one. Yet a significant person in your life has died, or even more poignantly, this could be your very first Christmas without them. As the countdown to the big day begins, you may feel a range of emotions, from rising panic to dread. The world itself hasn't changed but viewed through the prism of deep grief it can seem strange and disconcerting. After losing your safety net – your special person - seasonal rituals that were once reassuring and enjoyable now seem hollow, inappropriate or just too painful to contemplate.



The nostalgia and tradition associated with Christmas can make this a particularly challenging time for the bereaved, with every decoration and family ritual laden with memories. One important thing to remember at this time of year is to be kind to yourself; grieving takes up precious reserves of energy and you may not have the stamina to throw yourself full tilt into the usual celebrations. Give yourself permission to have a totally different Christmas if you need to – decide on a meaningful way to spend the holidays this year and how it will serve you. That may include travelling abroad, having Christmas lunch at a

restaurant instead of at home or just choosing to shut out the world with a duvet day. Enlist the help of friends and family in advance if possible to avoid flashpoints that may overwhelm you with sad memories or cause 'grief attacks'.

Difficult as this time can be, there are some ways to help yourself survive the season which we have outlined inside this booklet.

James Tovey





Tips for Christmas...

Tovey Bros knows better than most how difficult this time of year can be for people facing Christmas without a loved one by their side. It can be incredibly hard but it is possible to introduce new meaning to the season. Survival tips to consider might be:

- Acknowledge the person missing at the table by lighting a special candle to celebrate their life, rather than just a recognition of their death. Sharing humorous stories of the departed have a healing quality to them and facing up to, rather than ignoring, the loss can reduce tension.

- Some churches and communities hold a memorial service at this time, often with creative ways of memorialising those we have lost, such as donating a living tree to a park in their name.

- Channelling the love we still hold for our significant person into a charitable endeavour can also help as it is the exchanging of love that we miss the most. Consider buying a gift for your absent loved one then giving it to someone in need or donate to a foodbank in your loved one's memory.

- If children are involved, encourage them to express their feelings and answer any questions they may have as honestly and openly as possible. Avoid phrases like 'Grandad is asleep' because the child may not understand the concept and

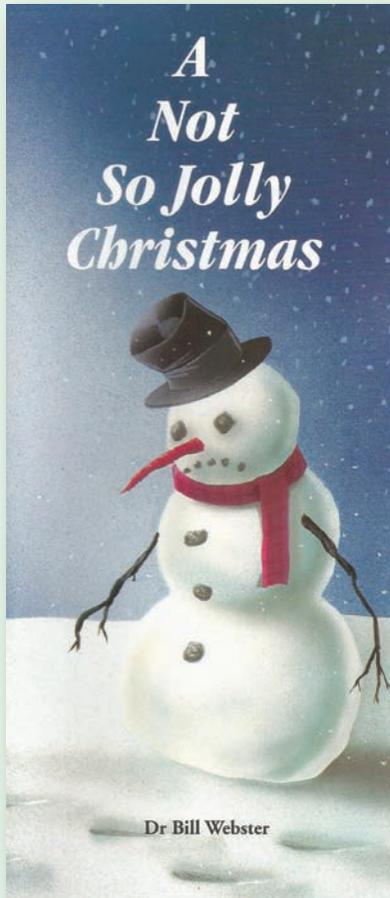
not want to go to bed at night. While we may want to spare them the grief, we should let them know their feelings are important and include them in any meaningful memorials.

- Finally, take a moment to review each Christmas activity or tradition, particularly those your loved one was responsible for, and ask yourself the following questions: Would the holidays be the same without it? Is this something you might want to do differently? Why do we do this – is it habit, tradition,

obligation or is it a meaningful expression of the holiday?

And on the day itself, remind yourself to go easy on yourself and others, don't put too many expectations on the day and hold onto the hope that next Christmas will be brighter.

For further tips on surviving the season, you can pick up a free copy of Dr Bill Webster's booklet 'A Not So Jolly Christmas' at Tovey Bros Funeral Directors in Newport or visit www.griefjourney.com



National Training Award for Tovey Bros...

Tovey Bros has won a national training accolade at the prestigious Funeral Planner of the Year Awards. The city's longest established funeral directors has taken home the Staff Training and Development Award.

Hosted by writer, broadcaster and former MP Gyles Brandreth, the ceremony took place on 27th September in central London and highlighted the achievements of independent funeral directors throughout the UK and Ireland.

James Tovey, who is the sixth generation family member to run Tovey Bros said: "The people who work at Tovey Bros are its most important asset, as we care for the bereaved and their families. We are fortunate to have a very dedicated team and it makes sense to invest in all of them

through both internal and external training."

"Our long-time accreditation as Investors in People is testament to this. It is lovely for all of our team to receive this national recognition in what was a highly contested award category."



Tovey Bros was also runner-up in two other categories – Family Business of the Year and Innovative Business Strategy Award.

Suzanne Grahame, Chief Executive of funeral plan provider Golden Charter which runs the awards, said: "We're delighted to recognise Tovey Bros' commitment to staff training and development, benefitting those involved in the business as well as the local families they serve.

"Aside from all of the day-to-day demands of running a busy funeral director business, it's fantastic to see



From left to right, TV personality Gyles Brandreth, James Tovey of Tovey Bros and Gordon Swan, Golden Charter Director of Communications at the Funeral Planner of the Year awards in Hyde Park.

this independent firm recognising the value of investing in its people."

In addition to the Funeral Planner of the Year accolade, the Woodland Trust has dedicated trees on behalf of Tovey Bros, which are to be planted locally at Wentwood in recognition of the company's achievement.

For further information on Golden Charter Funeral Plans, please contact Tovey Bros on 01633 266848 or visit www.toveybros.co.uk



Tovey Bros launches Facebook page...

FUNERAL directors have long been associated with tradition and dependability in a changing modern world but the profession must also move with the times to cater to upcoming generations. To this end, Tovey Bros launched its first social media page earlier this month with a Facebook page designed to facilitate communication with a wider audience and to show the very human side of the work done by funeral directors behind the scenes.

James Tovey said: "Our research has found increasing numbers of people are using social media to inform people about funeral arrangements so we will soon be offering this option alongside more traditional notices and hope it is something our families will embrace." Please like and share our page!