

Sources of help

A range of organisations offer emotional and practical support, and information to help people through their grief. Some of these are listed below.

Anam Cara Parental and Sibling Bereavement Support

Unit 3, 78 Walkinstown Road, Dublin 12

E-mail: info@anamcara.ie

Website: www.anamcara.ie

Formed to meet the needs of bereaved parents and families.

Bereavement Counselling Service

Greater Dublin Area, Bray, Carlow and Newbridge

Dublin Street, Baldoyle, Dublin 13

Phone: 01 839 1766

E-mail: bereavement@eircom.net

Website: www.bereavementireland.org

One-to-one counselling which includes a special service for children.

Compassionate Friends

Phone: 075 31493 and 021 436 4695

Voluntary group of bereaved parents offering friendship, support and understanding to other bereaved parents.

Irish Hospice Foundation

Morrison Chambers, 32 Nassau Street, Dublin 2

Phone: 01 679 3188

E-mail: info@hospice-foundation.ie

Website: www.hospice-foundation.ie

Solas

Barnardo's, Christchurch Square, Dublin 8

Phone: 01 473 2110 (Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 10am to 12 noon)

E-mail: solas@barnardos.ie

Bereavement counselling for children.

Rainbows Ireland Ltd

National Office, Loreto Centre, Crumlin Road, Dublin 12

Phone: 01 473 4175

E-mail: rainbows@eircom.net

Helps children who have lost a parent.

STEPS

30-31 Bride Street, Dublin 8

Phone: 01 473 4143

Advice and counselling service for young people.

Samaritans

Phone: 1850 60 90 90

E-mail: jo@samaritans.org

This provides 24-hour emotional support to people who are distressed.

The Meningitis Trust

We, the Meningitis Trust, are a registered charity set up in 2001 to provide awareness about meningitis and to support families who have been affected by this devastating illness. We are committed to increasing understanding of the disease and providing specialised professional services to anyone who has been affected. These services offer emotional and practical support to help people rebuild their lives.

Here are some of the ways we do this.

24-hour nurse-led helpline – a Freephone service, providing information and support seven days a week

Professional counselling – confidential counselling for people who have had meningitis and their families

Home visits – trained staff offer information and support in people's homes

One-to-one contacts – putting people affected by meningitis in touch with volunteers who have also experienced the disease

This is only made possible by donations from people like you, as we rely almost entirely on voluntary support to fund our work.



24-hour nurse-led helpline

1800 523 196

www.meningitis-trust.ie

The Meningitis Trust

PO Box 102

Bray

Co Wicklow

Phone: 01 2762050

Fax: 01 276 2051



Meningitis bereavement information

Explaining the pain and trauma of experiencing sudden loss following meningitis and meningococcal septicaemia



Bereavement

Bereavement is a distressing but common experience, and the death of someone you love following meningitis or meningococcal septicaemia is always traumatic and painful.

This leaflet aims to provide help, information, understanding and support for people who, tragically, have had this experience.

For many, the suddenness of the disease and the speed with which it develops is both shocking and overwhelming. Families are left feeling stunned and traumatised, sometimes within a matter of hours. For many people, the idea that an infectious disease can have such a devastating effect in the 21st century is hard to understand.

Most people know very little about meningitis and septicaemia until they are affected by it. Many unanswered questions about the disease, and the emotional reactions to grief, are likely to cause confusion for individuals and families.

Grieving

Grieving takes place after any experience of loss, but particularly after the death of someone you love. You can experience grief through physical symptoms, such as headaches, a hollow feeling in your stomach, breathlessness or a dry mouth.

Experiencing loss can cause your mind to react in unexpected or disturbing ways, such as disbelief, confusion, and sensing the presence of the person who has died. These are quite natural to someone grieving, and are temporary reactions to loss which will disappear in time.

Grief can also influence your behaviour, for example, disturbed sleep, crying, changes in appetite and withdrawing from society. Many people also find that their relationships with others around them can change after a bereavement.

Children also experience grief, and you need to listen to their thoughts and feelings. If you do not tell them what has happened, they may become confused and anxious. Talking to them in words they will understand is important. Sometimes children may need professional help.

Crying is natural and beneficial. It is a way of releasing emotion. Above all, grief takes time – it cannot be hurried or avoided. For example, being told that you have to get on with the rest of your life may prevent you from confronting your loss or managing its symptoms.

“*There are no right or wrong ways to grieve. Each individual expresses and experiences grief in a different and unique way.*”

Dr Phillip Rees, Meningitis Trust Counsellor

Feelings

There is no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ way to feel following the death of someone close to you. It is natural to feel some or all of the following emotions, and it is important to recognise that these are part of the grieving process – guilt, anger, numbness, resentment, the need to blame, utter despair and physical pain, total disbelief, shock, intense sadness, loneliness and isolation.

It is important to recognise that these emotions are part of the grieving process. These emotions may also lead to depression.

What you can do

It is important to acknowledge that grief is a natural response to loss. It is also vital that you do not try to hide or deny your feelings. Being aware of these feelings and the way you are responding will help you through the process of grieving.

Getting support from friends and family, and talking about your loss, can be very beneficial. This can be difficult and at times painful, but it is important to talk about the person you have lost and share memories of them with other people close to you.

Family members and friends may also be grieving and finding it difficult to help. Sometimes, talking to someone unrelated and removed from the situation can be helpful. This may be face to face, over the phone or by e-mail. It may also help to talk to someone who has shared a similar experience.

How we can help you

We, the Meningitis Trust, recognise that you may find it difficult to ask for help after someone close to you has died. We can offer support in many ways, including providing a professional counselling service. Counselling is an opportunity to talk in confidence to someone experienced in listening to people in distress. It focuses on the emotional crisis and the life changes that you may be experiencing. Our counselling team and our trained staff provide a listening and support service for as long as you need it.

Please phone our helpline to find out more about our free counselling service.