



St Mary's  
University  
Twickenham  
London

Student Services

## Student Bereavement Support

Losing someone close to you is one of the most profound and intense emotional, psychological and physical experience you may go through.

It can be a confusing and distressing time, whether the death was expected or not it can bring a variety of differing emotions and physical reactions.

Bereavement can affect people in many different ways; there are no maps and guidelines on how to grieve. You may be in shock or denial, feel sad, angry or depressed, or you may feel worried because you don't seem to be feeling anything at all. You might even feel actual, physical pain as you absorb the news of your loss. These are all normal and natural responses.

St Mary's is committed to developing the whole person, and this includes offering support and compassion to students effected by bereavement. This guidance pulls together the support available in the event of bereavement.

### How can I help myself through bereavement?

- Look after yourself, eat properly and get enough rest.
- Try to accept help from friends and family, who will want to help you.
- Remember it is alright to want to have some time on your own.
- Talking about the person and your feelings can be enormously helpful.

No one has ever found an easy cure for grief. Grieving is a unique experience and there is no right or wrong way to do it, only your way. There is no set time limit for grief, as time goes on you will find that you are able to focus on happier memories and adjust to life without the person and that does not mean that you will forget those that you have lost.

### In the unfortunate event of a student experiencing bereavement, there are a number of support measures available;

- **Student Services:** Student Services can offer support to students affected by bereavement through the [Mental Health Advice Service](#) including referrals for [Counselling](#).
- **TogetherAll:** You are not alone. Join the online mental health community. Accessible anytime, anywhere find out more here. Sign up [here](#) with your St Mary's email.
- **Chaplaincy:** St Mary's Chaplaincy Service is open to staff and students. [Find out more about the chaplaincy here](#).

- **External Support:** There is a list of external support services on mental health available to students on Simmspace [here](#).
- **Academic Support:** Academic colleagues such as personal tutors, programme directors can offer pastoral support to bereaved students and guidance regarding an appropriate time to return to their studies and or managing assignments. Departmental extenuating circumstances can be discussed and if appropriate agreed locally. Other applications for extenuating circumstances should be via Registry. Evidence such as a Death Certificate of the deceased person will be required.
- **Registry:** In some circumstances a bereavement may mean significant adjustments, for instance covering caring responsibilities, making funeral arrangements and dealing with loss. Students can request extenuating circumstances or a Leave of absence if they need more time to complete work or to take time out from university. [Find out more about relevant forms to complete here](#)

## Additional Guidance and Resources

- The [St Mary's University Art of Dying Well](#) project offers practical and spiritual support to those faced with the prospect of death and dying. This website brings together resources on death and bereavement, including how to talk about death, facing death personally, and caring for the dying.
- The **NHS** offers a guide for coping with '[Grief after bereavement or loss](#)' and comprehensive guidance and signposting on [bereavement and young people](#).
- [Cruse Bereavement Care](#) offer support, advice and information to children, young people and adults when someone dies. They also provide a leaflet about what you can do to help yourself, how others can help you, how you can help other people who may be struggling to cope after the death of someone close, and where you can get more advice and support. [Read the Restoring Hope leaflet](#).
- [Grief Encounter](#): Charity supporting children and young people with bereavement
- [The Bereavement Trust](#) offers a free helpline providing comfort, support and practical advice about bereavement.
- [Support after suicide](#) offers information and support for anyone affected by suicide.
- [What's your grief](#) resources and discussion about grief.
- [The good grief trust](#) support and resources by others who have been bereaved.

## Special considerations during the coronavirus outbreak

This guidance has been prepared in recognition that students may experience bereavement due to COVID-19. St Mary's is committed to developing the whole person, and this includes offering support and compassion to those affected by bereavement, especially during this particularly challenging time.

During the coronavirus pandemic many people will be cut off from their usual support network; living alone and social isolation can make grieving more difficult as we feel separated from our usual ways of coping and are unable to come together, to hug and cry and to share our pain and loss. Bereavement can also sometimes put strain on family relationships, so while being a source of comfort and support, being isolated with family could also be a source of additional stress for the bereaved.

Funerals are an important part of the grieving process, they help us to fully acknowledge that the person has gone. At the moment, funerals are allowed to go ahead, but With some restrictions, the latest guidance on managing a funeral during the Coronavirus Pandemic can be found [here](#). When we cannot come together to support each other and draw strength in our usual way, our grief could be that much harder and as such we may not have the usual tools for grieving and closure during this time period. This might also mean that the full impact of your grief might not be felt until the coronavirus pandemic is over and life has returned to normality.

It is important to give yourself time. Time to absorb the news of your loss, time to allow whatever emotions to emerge and time to reach out when you feel ready to. There are many organisations that are trained to support those who are grieving.

## **Additional support and guidance for dealing with coronavirus related bereavement**

- Cruse Bereavement Care, a local national charity for bereaved people have put together guidance on [dealing with bereavement and grief during coronavirus](#) which you may find useful.
- The charity **Sudden** has produced [covid-19 specific bereavement advice](#) which can be accessed as follows:
- [What's your grief](#) resources and discussion about grief.
- [The good grief trust](#) support and resources by others who have been bereaved.