



Together  
Dementia  
Support



**Coping with Loss in  
your volunteering**

**In your volunteering role at Together Dementia Support, you might become very close to a person living with dementia that you support. If that person dies or is placed into care, it may be difficult to come to terms with it. Loss is a universal experience and affects everyone differently.**

This guide looks at what you might be feeling and thinking after the loss of someone you have been supporting, whether that has been through them being placed into care or by them passing away. Grief is a complex and intensely personal experience and there is no right or wrong way of coping. It is important to know that support is available – and that you're not alone.

Have a look through this guide and take what you need from it. If you would like to speak to someone, please reach out to your Volunteer Co-Ordinator or Dementia Support Co-Ordinator.



### How you may be feeling as a volunteer

You may not feel you need emotional support to deal with the death of the person you've been working with. This may be because you've not known each other for very long or already feel well equipped to cope with bereavement.

For others, the death of that person will have a much greater impact, or it may spark feelings from personal grief they have experienced in the past. Everyone experiences grief differently, whether you think about that person as a friend or someone you supported as a volunteer.

You may want to manage any feelings you have on your own. But it's also good to know that, if you want to, you can talk to others and draw on their support. Your Volunteer Co-Ordinator and Dementia Support Co-Ordinator are here to talk to you, if that would be helpful. If you're worried about

anything you're thinking or feeling, or you're finding it hard to cope, please do seek support.

You may experience periods of sadness, and these may become more pronounced after some time has passed. We are always here to listen, if you would find it helpful. It may also help to talk to those around you or to a support organisation.

The bereavement support organization At a Loss has a database of local services ([www.ataloss.org](http://www.ataloss.org))

If you experience intense sadness, it will often ease as time goes on. It is not uncommon, though, to still miss the person years later, particularly on occasions such as the person's birthday or around the anniversary of their death, if you had been close.



We're here to support you with whatever you decide to do next. Have a look at the options below and let us know what feels right for you.



### Taking a break

You may like to continue your volunteering with us, but just need a little more time. If this is the case, we can look to pause your volunteering for the time being, until you feel ready to return.



### Continue to volunteer with Together Dementia Support

We greatly value the time you have given, and you may wish to continue in your role as a volunteer. We would love it if you wanted to continue volunteering. It may be possible to introduce you to a different person if you volunteer with Together @ Home, or you might prefer to try something different and take on a new volunteer role with us. We'll be in touch in about a month's time to see if you'd like to continue as a volunteer and talk through what might be of interest.



### Ending your volunteer journey

Not everyone feels they want to continue volunteering when somebody they have been working alongside dies or is placed into care. We also recognise things may have changed for you in your life. If you feel you would rather stop volunteering with us, we will miss you, but understand that things change. We will always be here if you change your mind at [volunteers@togetherdementiasupport.org](mailto:volunteers@togetherdementiasupport.org)

We promote all our volunteering opportunities on our website (<https://www.togetherdementiasupport.org/volunteer>), so please take a look when the time feels right.

The circumstances of the loss can affect how you feel about it: for example, whether it was sudden or expected. For some people, the loss may also bring up memories or feelings of any personal bereavements.

### When someone dies and we don't have any more information

We recognise it can be difficult when you don't know the circumstances of someone's death, particularly if it is unexpected. Sometimes we are not given any more information. We will always share with you any information we are able to.

For more support, please see the links to bereavement organisations listed on [pages 7 and 8](#).

### When someone dies through suicide or other trauma

The death of someone through suicide or in a traumatic way is often particularly difficult. Cruse Bereavement Care has information on coping with death through suicide, violence or crime, and other traumatic incidents. It also runs a bereavement helpline and has local support groups ([0808 808 1677](tel:08088081677), [www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/local-services](http://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/local-services))



## Sometimes the death of someone you know can bring up thoughts about your own mortality.

Bereavement can make you anxious and this is a common response. If it is troubling you, speak to your GP or someone you trust, or see Independent Age's guide about Managing anxiety (<https://www.independentage.org/get-advice/managing-anxiety>).

If you have been through a bereavement of a family member or friend, it is not uncommon for these feelings to resurface when you hear about the death of a person you have been supporting.

Grief doesn't just affect people emotionally. The stress and anxiety it causes can also produce physical symptoms like feeling more tired or less hungry.

These are common symptoms, but grief can affect people in all sorts of ways. If you are worried about your health or wellbeing, or are struggling to resume daily tasks, speak to your GP.

Volunteers can also access our Employee Assistance Programme for counselling services (**0800 023 4742**) including stress and anxiety.



The loss of anyone close to you can have an impact, so it is important to be kind to yourself and give yourself time to grieve. Allow yourself to feel sad and to remember the person in your own way.

Talking to others about the person who has died or been placed into care and sharing your memories of them can really help. If you would like to share your memories of the person with us, please let us know.

There is no time limit on grieving. People usually feel less sad as time goes on. However, you may continue to have feelings of sadness at particular times, like when you would usually visit them for T@H or when you are at the group again.



Many people find it helpful to read about other people's experiences of grief. Literature based on personal experiences of overcoming grief can all be helpful.

Cruse (**0808 808 1677**, <https://www.cruse.org.uk/about/blog/books-about-grief/>) and The Compassionate Friends (**0345 123 2304**, <https://www.tcf.org.uk/r-reading-list/>) both have recommended reading lists you could use as a starting point or you could look in your local library. The Compassionate Friends also operates a postal lending library.

Overcoming Grief is part of the Overcoming self-help series, endorsed by the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

See <https://overcoming.co.uk> or find it in libraries and bookshops.

### Your GP

If you feel you're not coping or have any physical or mental health concerns, remember you can always speak to your GP.

### Bereavement and support organisations

There are lots of organisations that can offer support. Many of these run local support groups, as well as offering information and advice. Check what's available in your area. Your Dementia Support Co-Ordinator can support you with this – just ask them.

**Cruse Bereavement Care** offers support, advice and information to bereaved people (**0808 808 1677**, <https://cruse.org.uk>).

**Bereavement Advice Centre** runs a helpline and online information service (**0800 634 9494**, <https://bereavementadvice.org>).

**GriefChat** offers free online bereavement support (<https://griefchat.co.uk>).

**Samaritans** runs a 24-hour helpline. You can talk to someone about anything that's troubling you (**116 123**, <https://samaritans.org>).



## Manchester-based Services

42<sup>nd</sup> Street support young people with emotional well-being and mental health by offering a choice of effective, creative, young person-centred and rights-based approaches. (0161 228 7321, <https://www.42ndstreet.org.uk/>)

Kooth offers access to anonymous and personalised mental health support for Children and Young People (<https://www.koothplc.com/>)

Mind is based at the Zion Centre and you don't need a GP referral. They offer a range of services for anyone (<https://www.mind.org.uk/>, 0300 123 3393) that may include:

- Talking therapy
- Crisis helplines
- Advocacy
- Employment and training schemes
- Counselling
- Befriending services

African and Caribbean Mental Health Services (<https://www.acmh-services.co.uk/>, 0161 226 9562) offer a free service for anyone over 18+. They provide culturally appropriate wellbeing support in talking therapies and psychological therapies.

**Thank you once again for volunteering at Together Dementia Support. Remember to get in touch with your Volunteer Co-Ordinator if you need any support.**