



## **Supporting you following the death of your grandchild**

The death of a grandchild can bring many intense grief feelings, as you not only feel the pain and devastation for the loss of your grandchild, but also for your child. Being unable to protect your son or daughter from the pain and grief of their loss and not being able to “fix” or “change” the situation can be hard to manage, but this is such a natural way to feel. Finding the strength to cope with your own grief and support your child can take time and feel overwhelming.

Families are formed in many ways; couples, single parents, birthparents, blended families, with grandchildren born into the family, fostered or adopted. We are all unique! Your relationships or family situation may all be factors that influence how others perceive your loss. However, regardless of who that grandchild is to you, these circumstances and factors are not likely to change how deeply you grieve for their death.

The death of a Grandchild can bring feelings such as guilt, guilt that you are still alive, and your grandchild is not. You may feel you have lived a rich and fulfilled life and experience guilt around this. This is called survivor guilt; it can be very shocking when a grandchild dies as this is not the natural order. For you as a grandparent to outlive their grandchild and this can leave you with intense and difficult feelings.

### **Grief reactions**

When someone we love dies, we often have so many different feelings shock, numbness, sadness, denial, anger, the world as we knew it has been turned upside down and it’s often very hard to make any sense of it all. Searching for answers and then trying to find the meaning of what has happened can bring a family closer together but can sometimes cause a family total despair.

It is important to remember that everyone grieves differently and there are no right or wrong ways to grieve the death of a loved one. Our feelings and emotions can change from one day to the next, being aware of each other’s emotions, making allowances and being supportive is important. Our grief feelings rarely coincide with someone else’s and remembering this can be helpful.

### **Support for you**

Talking is important when dealing with grief and speaking about and expressing your emotions safely with someone supportive like a close friend can help. Being able to talk about your grandchild and share memories with someone close can be comforting. Remember to look after yourself physically by continuing to eat well, exercise and keeping a sleep routine are all important. There are grief services available to support grandparents and these can be immensely helpful in offering advice and support and talking with other people experiencing similar situations.



## Supporting your child and family

Many grandparents feel they want to help and offer support to their grieving child and family. Ways that you can help practically might be buying food or making meals or even some household jobs and supporting with the care of other grandchildren. It is a difficult time for everyone, including surviving grandchildren and they will need extra love and support as well as help to understand the situation. It might be helpful to talking together about what the most helpful ways are that you can support your family. Establishing and maintaining open and honest communication is always useful and what might be refused one day could well be accepted the next. Just checking in can be a great help and support to your child and family. The overwhelming feelings of grief can impact on how people ask for and accept support and as mentioned earlier we all grieve differently and in our own way and time.

One of the most important things to remember is that you cannot make this better for your child, but you can grieve alongside them. The death of a child changes a parent, and this can be hard for other family members to accept, but with love and good communication you can support your son or daughter in a way that is helpful to them and you.

## Support services

- ✚ **The Compassionate Friends.**  
0345 123 2304 helpline 0288 77 88 016 NI helpline  
[www.tcf.org.uk](http://www.tcf.org.uk)
  
- ✚ **The Child Death Helpline**  
Helpline 0800282986  
[www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk](http://www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk)
  
- ✚ **Cruse Bereavement Care**  
Helpline: 0808 808 1677 Mon, Fri 9.30am – 5pm and Tues, Weds, Thurs 9.30am – 8pm  
[www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)