

OUTR

NORMALISING DEATH

October 2018

WELCOME TO THE OTR GUIDE TO TALKING ABOUT DEATH

Death is something that all of us experience in varying ways, and is a key part of life. It's absolutely natural, permanent and can even underlie a lot of our worries. So... why do we never talk about it?

At OTR we recognise that death is something that brings with it a lot of feelings, often a lot of negative feelings. This is totally normal! However, we also believe that these feelings can be made a lot worse by avoiding the subject, and pretending death isn't something to talk about.

This booklet is designed to help us start thinking about death, including our thoughts and beliefs around it, as well as how to look after ourselves when we face loss.

Having a healthy relationship with the idea of death can be freeing for our lives in the long term - it can help us to invest more time into our relationships, projects and what we want from our lives.

(As we know that this is a difficult topic, we invite you to look at this material with kindness and openness, especially towards yourself! You got this. We trust you.)



1. WHAT DO WE THINK ABOUT DEATH?

Now, as we've already stated - death can be a loaded topic, that can be hard to talk about and think about. So to get us started, lets just have a think about what comes to mind when we think of death.

1. What words come to mind when you think of death?

E.G. Funerals, celebration, halloween...

2. Are there any images that come to mind? What about songs or films?

E.G. Graves, roses, I Kill Giants, My Sisters Keeper...

3. Thinking about what you've got down already, are there any patterns here? (e.g. are they all negative? etc.)

DEATH AS A NATURAL CYCLE

'Death is happening all around us in many processes in the natural world - have a look at this life cycle of tree for example...'

1. SEED

A seed finds its way into some fertile earth, and is germinated. With the right conditions, it will grow into a seedling.

2.

SEEDLING

The seedling is a young plant. It needs sunshine, water and warmth to grow into a tree.

THE LIFE AND DEATH CYCLE OF A TREE

5. SNAGS

Dying trees are called snags. The snag slowly breaks, and when it falls gives its nutrients back to the soil. This provides fertile earth for new life to grow.

3. YOUNG TREE

Over time, the seedling will grow into a young tree, or a 'sapling'.

4. MATURE TREE

In good conditions, the tree will mature and sprout branches, flowers or fruits.

2. WHAT ARE OUR BELIEFS AROUND DEATH?

Our beliefs about death are often pretty closely linked to our beliefs about life - whether this be our religious or spiritual beliefs, what meanings we place on our every day living or our thoughts about an afterlife.

Use the following space to jot down your beliefs about death, for example what it means, how it works and what the consequences of death are for our life.

1. Try and come up with 4 'I believe' comments about death...

E.G. I believe... death happens to everyone

.....

1. I believe...

.....

2. I believe...

.....

3. I believe...

.....

4. I believe...

.....

2. Where could these beliefs come from? (for example, religion or society)... How useful are they for you?

3. WHAT HELPS YOU COPE WITH LOSS?

As we've mentioned, loss -whether it be death or something else - is a part of life, and can naturally be difficult to deal with. Often giving yourself a break by focussing on positive stuff can be super useful. Note down any things you use to help manage these feelings.

Music?

- E.G. Jimmy Eat World - Hear You Me

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Books?

- E.G. Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows

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Films?

- E.G. My Sisters Keeper

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Quotes?

- E.G. "Death is not the opposite of life, but a part of it." - Haruki Murakami

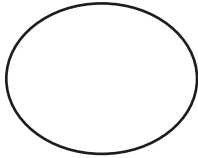
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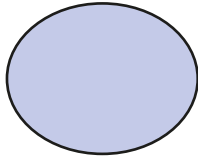
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4. GROWING AROUND LOSS

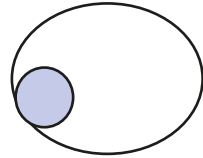
When we think about grief and loss, we imagine that that the impact of that loss will shrink in us over time and we 'get over it'. Sort of like this:



Life before grief

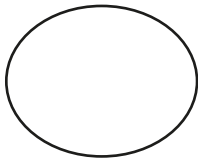


Life taken over by grief

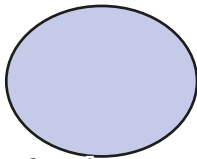


How we imagine grief 'gets smaller'

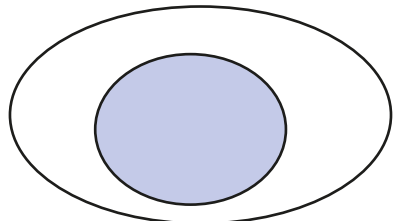
However, grief rarely gets as small as we might think or hope for. Rather we, as people grow around the grief, and therefore the same grief takes up a smaller part in our life. Like this:



Life before grief



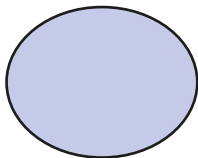
Life taken over by grief



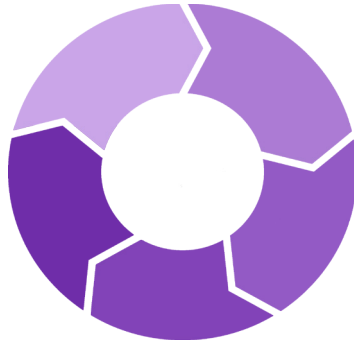
Life growing around grief

Whether you've lost anyone or not, have a think about what you could do to help your life grow in loss.

Eg. Spend more time with friends



Eg. Learn a new instrument



**This booklet was made by OTR Bristol,
a mental health social movement by and
for young people aged 11-25 in Bristol
and South Glos.**

**For more information on what we do,
come and see us at one of our Hubs:
otrbristol.org.uk/what-we-do/hubs.**

**You can also call us for free on
0808 808 9120 (Mon-Fri, 2-5pm).**

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