

# Workshop Grief in the Workplace

—  
evh HR People Conference  
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Presenter:

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**Cruse  
Scotland**  
Bereavement Support

## About Us

- Cruse Bereavement Care – established 1959
- Cruse Bereavement Care Scotland – established 2001.
- Cruse Scotland Bereavement Support – rebrand May 2022
- Support children, young people and adults
  - regardless of relationship, time since death, cause of death
- 250 volunteers across Scotland supported by 22 staff



Our vision is a  
**compassionate**  
Scotland in which  
the impact of  
bereavement and  
grief is **properly**  
**understood** and  
**supported**.



# Today's workshop

Where grief impacts the workplace

Grief Theory

Communication

Bereavement charter

Questions



**Where do you see grief in your workplace  
or the workplaces you support?**



**What is grief?**



# What is loss?

<b>Regret</b>	<b>Moving school</b>	<b>Holiday cancelled</b>	<b>Redundancy</b>
<b>Victim of scam / fraud</b>	<b>Bankruptcy</b>	<b>Moving to residential care</b>	<b>Loss of friends</b>
<b>Moving house</b>	<b>Murder</b>	<b>Body dysmorphia</b>	<b>Being unable to conceive</b>
<b>Prison</b>	<b>Miscarriage / stillbirth</b>	<b>Major illness</b>	<b>Sensory loss</b>
<b>Redundancy</b>	<b>Pet death</b>	<b>Death of a celebrity</b>	<b>Burglary / theft</b>
<b>Retirement</b>	<b>Amputation of limb</b>	<b>Death</b>	<b>Divorce / separation</b>
<b>Pregnancy termination</b>	<b>Substance abuse</b>	<b>Homelessness</b>	<b>Loss of culture</b>
<b>Dementia</b>	<b>Suicide</b>	<b>Growing up</b>	<b>Mental health issues</b>



# Attachment, loss & grief – some background

- The pain caused by loss is 'grief'. All loss will contain grief experienced at different levels or intensities.
- We don't grieve for loss unless there has been attachment to the object, meaning, place, relationship, belief or person.
- Our attachments to those we love are not just physical, they are the 'invisible bonds that connect us over space and time'.
- Our attachments are reinforced through physical, social contact and through our communication.
- Grief is a natural, human response, which happens when an attachment is broken or interrupted.
- Bereavement is a specific type of loss.





# Grief – unique factors

- The person
- Our world
- Other “interruptions”



# Grief – unique factors – the person

- Who the person was
  - Their place in our lives
  - The meaning we attached to that
  - The roles they played
- Nature of the attachment
  - Secure
  - Insecure
  - Abivalent
- How the person died
  - Expected
  - Unexpected
  - Frightening / traumatic



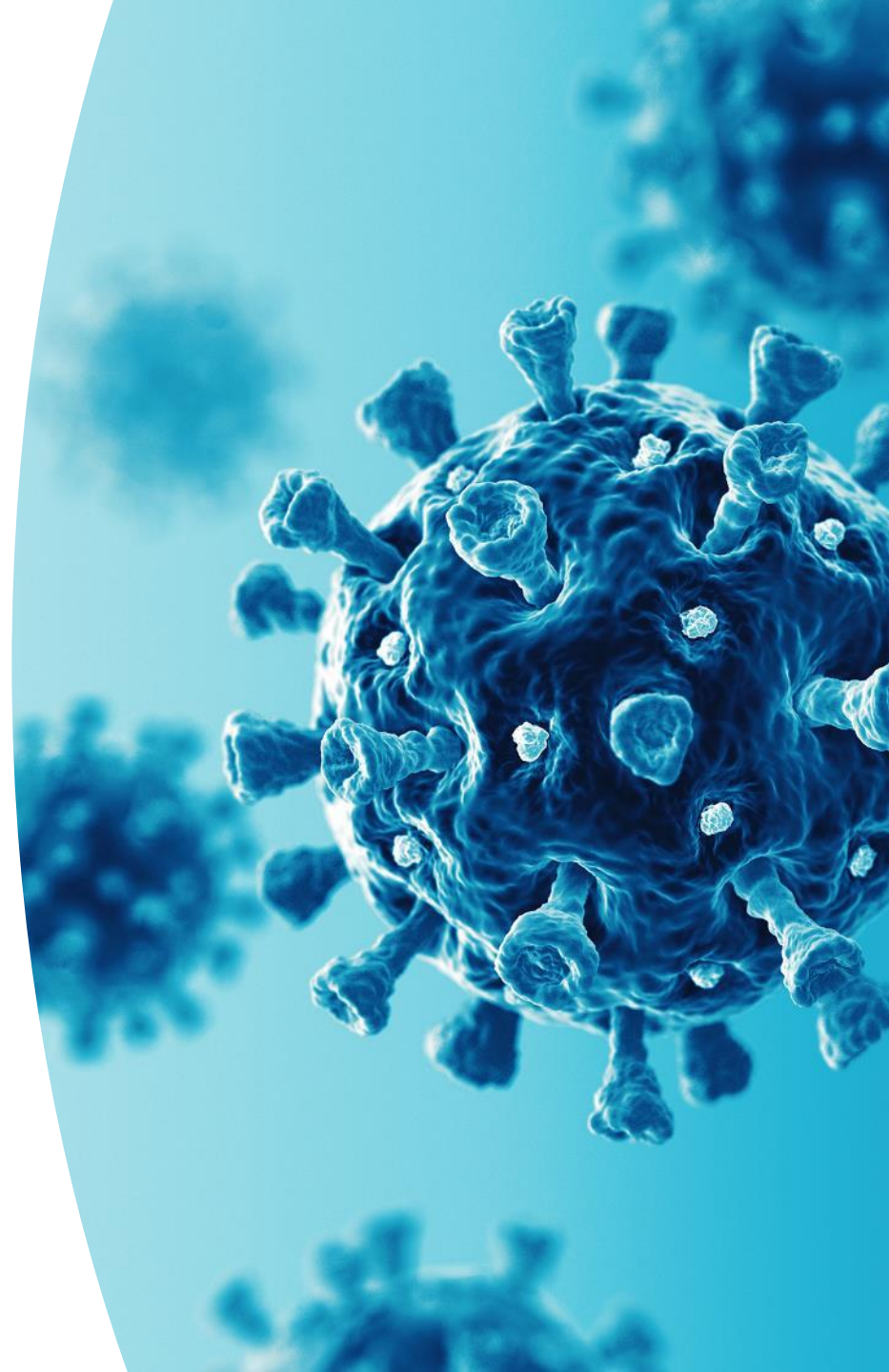
# Grief – unique factors – our world

- Previous losses
  - How they have left us prepared / not prepared to grieve
- Family relationships
  - How connected / disconnected we feel to others
- Culture and Customs
  - How they may assist or hinder
- Ongoing stress
  - What's going on - before, during & after
- Expectations on ourselves from others
  - What we 'think' other expect



# Grief – unique factors – Covid-19

- Suddenness
- Lack of or restricted rituals
- Social isolation
- No structure
- Guilt



**What does grief look like?**



# How would you recognise grief?

## Feelings

Sadness  
Anger  
Guilt  
Yearning  
Numbness  
Shock  
Jealousy  
Loneliness  
Helplessness  
Anxiety/Fear  
Tiredness  
Relief  
Worthlessness

## Physical sensations

Hollowness in stomach  
Tightness in the chest  
Tightness in the throat  
Breathlessness  
Lack of energy  
Dry mouth  
Oversensitivity to noise

## Cognitions

Disbelief  
Confusion  
Preoccupation  
Sense of presence  
Hallucinations  
Suicidal ideation

## Behaviours

Sleep disturbance  
Loss of appetite  
Absent mindedness  
Dreams/nightmares  
Searching  
Sighing/crying  
Hyperactivity  
'Dark / Gallows Humour'  
Treasuring objects  
Avoiding reminders  
Anti-social behaviour  
Violence  
Self-medication  
Changed sexual behaviour



# The Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement

(Stroebe & Schut, 1999)



# Where does your role land..?

What grief might I be looking in on?

How do I need to adapt?

Days?

Weeks?

Months?

Years?





# Grief Theory - Phases of Grief

- Shock & Numbness: *initial days & weeks*
  - Psychological air bag – natural self defence survival mechanism
  - Ability to process information difficult
  - Slow down | repeat | reassure | normalise
- Yearning & Searching: *weeks & first months*
  - Strong emotions may be energetically expressed
  - You may feel like the target!
  - Don't take it personally | reassure | normalise
- Disorganisation & Despair: *months following*
  - Withdrawal and disengagement
  - Compromised thinking
  - Patience | reassure | normalise
- Reorganisation & Recovery: Ongoing in your new reality



# How to speak to a grieving colleague

How Do You Help a Grieving Friend?

Megan Devine

Refuge in Grief

<https://youtu.be/I2zLCCRT-nE>



# Resources for Workplaces

- Materials / leaflets
- Bespoke Bereavement Support
- Suicide Bereavement Support
- Training



# Bereavement Training for Workplaces

## **Introduction to Grief and Loss**

An introductory course ideal for a range of organisations who wish to upskill their team in understanding more about grief, bereavement and loss.

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

## **Creating a Bereavement-Friendly Workplace: A Guide for Managers**

This training module is split into two sessions and is tailored to give managers the skills to nurture a positive bereavement experience in the workplace.

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

## **Talking Compassionately about Death, Dying, and Bereavement**

A course to resource staff who have contact with bereaved people as part of their role. This training will build confidence and understanding of the impact of grief on communication.

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

## **Bespoke Bereavement Training for the Workplace**

Cruse Scotland can offer personalised support to your company or organisation, based on your specific needs around grief and bereavement.

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

## **Talking about Death and Dying with Children and Young People**

A training course designed to help school staff, youth workers and childcare professionals develop skills and confidence in supporting children and young people who are bereaved.

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

## **Wellbeing when Working with Clients' Grief, Distress and Trauma**

A safe, supportive resourcing session for staff in any role, where exposure to others' distress and trauma can occur / be present. This training seeks to raise awareness and understanding of grief and trauma.

[FIND OUT MORE](#)



# Bereavement Charter for Scotland



Find the full charter here:

[https://www.goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk/content/bereavement\\_charter/](https://www.goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk/content/bereavement_charter/)

## **IN SCOTLAND, PEOPLE ARE SUPPORTIVE OF FRIENDS, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS WHO HAVE BEEN BEREAVED, WHICH MEANS THAT:**

- people's needs and grief reactions are recognised and acknowledged as being different at different times
- grief and bereavement can begin before death and can be lifelong
- people who have been bereaved should feel supported to talk about the person who has died if they wish to
- bereavement and grieving can be experienced by the whole community and not just by individuals
- there is help to know where to refer or signpost people to for additional support



# Bereavement Charter Mark - for employers



**At least three** of the following:

1. All staff are informed that their organisation is endorsing the Bereavement Charter and given an opportunity to watch the following short films about bereavement:
  - Bereavement Charter Animation
  - Sue Ryder Grief Kind Classes
2. All Managers within the organisation have read the "Resources for Managers, Colleagues and Employers" section of the Scottish Bereavement Friendly Workplaces Toolkit.
3. Senior Management has developed/adopted a Bereavement Policy for the organisation. (The ACAS Example Bereavement Policy provides a useful guide.)
4. The organisation has set out ways that it will visibly promote more awareness of bereavement and bereavement support, for example through its website and social media channels.
5. The organisation has/will develop and display a local workplace bereavement charter.



# Over to you ...

Questions

Observations

Reflections

Comments



# Your takeaway?

*Why did I come here?*

*Is there more I need?*

*What do I do next?*







**Cruse  
Scotland**  
Bereavement Support

**Helpline**      Freephone 0808 802 6161

**E-mail**        [support@crusescotland.org.uk](mailto:support@crusescotland.org.uk)

**Webchat**      [www.crusescotland.org.uk](http://www.crusescotland.org.uk)

