

# CARING FOR YOURSELF WHEN DIFFICULT MEMORIES ARISE



This is a **gentle guide** for people grieving after a traumatic loss. This worksheet is designed to be **safe** to complete on your own. **You do not need to revisit traumatic memories** or write anything detailed or upsetting.

## BEFORE YOU BEGIN

This worksheet is about **supporting yourself**, not pushing yourself.

- You **do not** need to write about traumatic events.
- If anything feels too much, **you can stop**.
- Take **breaks** as you need.
- Keep something **comforting** nearby (tea, a blanket, a calming object, or a pet).
- Choose a time when you **feel steady enough** – not exhausted, overwhelmed, or rushed.

## UNDERSTANDING DIFFICULT MEMORIES (GENTLY)

Sometimes memories can come up **suddenly** or **strongly** after a traumatic loss. These can include:

- Snippets of **images** or **sounds**
- Feelings that **come out of nowhere**
- A sense of being **pulled back** into a moment
- Thoughts that are **persistent** or **intrusive**

You are not being asked to explore these memories – just to understand that these experiences are common and *not a sign that you are “doing grief wrong.”*

**Reflect (optional):**

***When difficult memories arise, what do you normally feel or notice? (You can write a single word, a few sentences or skip this question altogether.)***

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# STAYING GROUNDED WHEN MEMORIES FEEL STRONG



Here are **grounding strategies** that may help when distressed by memories or other events...

**5-4-3-2-1 technique:** Notice 5 things you see, 4 you can hear, 3 you can smell, etc.

**Name the present moment:** *"I am here. I am safe enough right now."*

**Connect with your senses:** Hold something cold or warm, notice textures, inhale a soothing scent.

**Slow breathing:** 4 seconds in, 6 seconds out.

Choose **1 or 2 strategies** you want to try next time you need grounding:

## RECONNECTING TO MY LOVED ONE

Grief can involve **staying connected** to the love you shared and finding **comfort** in that bond. Choose **one gentle prompt**...

What values do you carry because of your loved one?

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What would they say to you to help you through a difficult time?

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What is something you wish you could say to them now?

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What helps you feel connected to them in daily life?

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# HELPFUL SUPPORT STRATEGIES



It can help to have a **small list of things** that **soothe** you or bring some **steadiness**.

*Something that calms my body:* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Something that soothes my feelings:* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Someone I can contact (if I want to):* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*A place or activity that feels safe:* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF AFTER THIS WORKSHEET

Before you end, take a moment to **check in with your body** and **emotions**.

How do I feel right now – calmer,  
tired, unsettled, neutral?

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Do I need a break, a warm drink,  
a walk, or a comforting routine?

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## IF MEMORIES FEEL TOO STRONG

This worksheet is **not meant to replace professional support**. If you ever feel overwhelmed, stuck, or frightened by your memories, consider contacting:

- A trusted **friend** or **family** member
- A **GP**
- A **therapist** or **counsellor**
- A **crisis line**

*You deserve support – you do not have to handle painful memories alone.*

# OTHER AVENUES FOR SUPPORT



***Please note that we are not a crisis service, so if you are in need of immediate support please do reach out to Samaritans who provide immediate listening support. They can be reached on 116 123.***

You are very welcome to attend any of our support events that suit your needs, but given that we are not a 24-hour service we regularly signpost people to other sources of support.

## **SAMARITANS**

Samaritans is a confidential telephone support line. They are available 24-hours a day and provide wonderful support. All of their volunteers are brilliantly trained, and are there to talk with you about anything and everything. If you need to talk you can call them anytime on 116-123.

Visit their website: <https://www.samaritans.org/>

## **MACMILLAN**

Macmillan have an online forum for bereaved partners and spouses where you can send chat messages to people who have experienced a similar loss. To join the forum and chat to others in a similar position for support, click here. Macmillan also have an online forum for bereaved family members and friends. To join in with those conversations and get support click here.

Visit their website: <https://www.macmillan.org.uk/>

## **AT A LOSS**

At a Loss provide signposting to bereavement services that allow you to find specific support local to you.

Visit their website: <https://www.ataloss.org/>

## **CRUSE**

Cruse provide 1-2-1 bereavement support to people who have experienced any type of grief. They have offices across the UK but you can reach them via their national helpline.

Visit their website: <https://www.cruse.org.uk/>

## **THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS**

The Compassionate Friends is a charitable organisation of bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents dedicated to the support and care of other similarly bereaved family members who have suffered the death of a child or children from a month old and on from any cause.

Visit their website: <https://www.compassionatefriends.org/>

## **WIDOWED AND YOUNG (WAY)**

Widowed and Young (WAY) is a national charity supporting men and women under the age of 50 when their partner dies. You can join as a member to meet others in a similar situation.

Visit their website: <https://www.widowedandyoung.org.uk/>

# SUPPORT SERVICES FROM THE LOSS FOUNDATION



## **Join a Support Group**

We provide regular online support groups – a place to share stories and experiences with others who have walked the path of cancer bereavement. Our incredible volunteers lead these peer support groups creating a warm and welcoming space.

*Learn more: <https://thelossfoundation.org/how-we-can-help/get-support/supportgroup/>*

## **Walk and Talks**

We host Walk and Talk events across the UK for people who have had a loved one die from cancer. These are informal get togethers for people, and most commonly involve walking and talking.

*Learn more: <https://thelossfoundation.org/how-we-can-help/get-support/walkandtalks/>*

## **Grief Support Workshops**

In all the time we've been here to support those who've lost someone to cancer, we've noticed some common threads in the cancer and loss journey. Even though every relationship and loss is unique, there are some symptoms and experiences many are likely to encounter.

*Learn more: <https://thelossfoundation.org/how-we-can-help/get-support/workshops/>*

## **Speak to Someone**

Introducing Connect, our one-on-one talking service akin to a Buddy System. The goal of Connect is to pair up individuals with similar losses for supportive conversations, meaningful connections.

*Learn more: <https://thelossfoundation.org/how-we-can-help/get-support/speak-to-someone/>*

## **Attend a Retreat**

Our retreat, Time After Loss, is a weekend of support for those who have lost a loved one to cancer – be they a friend, partner, or relative. It's a space where you can connect, share, and heal with others who understand.

*Learn more: <https://thelossfoundation.org/how-we-can-help/get-support/retreats/>*

## **Access Therapy**

We recognise that supporting bereavement is not a one-size fits all approach and that people need different things and at different time-points in their grief. Whilst we highly recommend engaging in peer-to-peer support.

*Learn more: <https://thelossfoundation.org/how-we-can-help/get-support/access-therapy/>*