



Coping with loss

This booklet helps us to understand how we might feel if we've lost someone or something close to us.

 mind

What is loss?

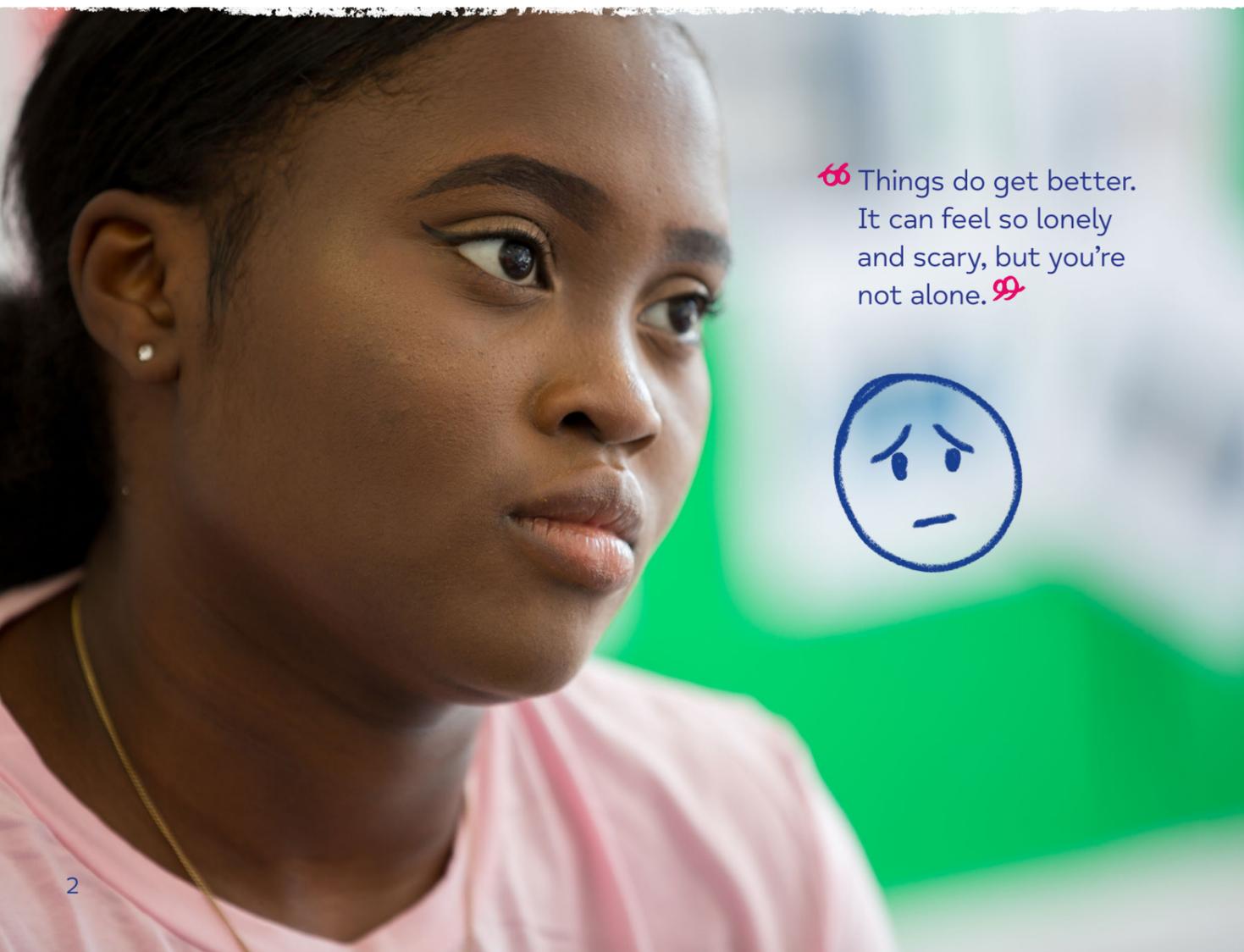
Loss is when we miss someone or something that we used to have, or used to know. It can also when we miss the way things used to be. You might also hear it called **grief** or **grieving**.

Loss can be incredibly difficult to cope with and it can feel as though it affects everything. **You may feel very alone.**

You might experience feelings of loss when there are major changes in your life, like if:

- Someone you're very close to has died or has a serious illness
- Your pet has died or is very ill
- Your parents or guardians are separating, or going through a divorce
- You've moved from a home or place you loved
- You've moved from a school where you were very happy
- You don't see your close friend anymore because they moved away

You may find that not many people your age have gone through something similar. It can feel like they don't understand or don't know what to say to you.



“ Things do get better. It can feel so lonely and scary, but you're not alone. ”



How does loss affect us?

Loss affects us all differently. **There is no right way or wrong way to feel.** But we can often feel confused about our feelings. Loss is very personal and can cause many different emotions. For example, in a family where someone has died, everyone will have had a different relationship with that person. Everyone will have their own unique and special memories.

Here are some of the things that we might feel after a loss:

Very sad or low	Feeling like it's difficult to focus	Lacking in energy or desire to do things
Numb – like we should feel things but can't feel anything right now	Misunderstood	Frustrated and angry
Guilty – like we're to blame, didn't do enough or didn't make the most of our time	Worried, anxious, frightened or nervous	Feeling like we have no control over our emotions
Feeling like we want to escape	Relief from the loss, but then feeling bad for thinking that way	

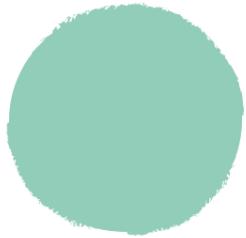
Feelings after a loss can be very intense, especially if it happened recently.

It might seem like these feelings affect everything – all of your thoughts and behaviours, plus physical things like your health, or how much or little you sleep and eat. Not everyone experiences loss in the same way. Their feelings may not be as intense or don't seem like they're taking over. Just as there are no rules about how you should feel, there are also no rules about how long the feelings will last. **It's different for all of us.**

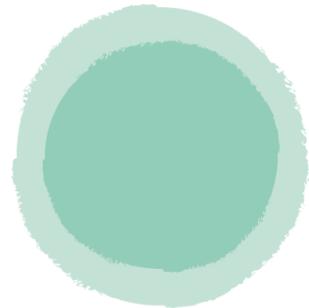
“ It's important to try and learn to recognise and address these feelings, and get the right support at that time to cope with them. ”

Your life beyond grief

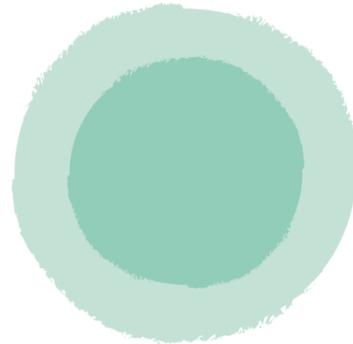
After experiencing loss, things might not feel exactly how they were before. **But it is possible to begin to enjoy life once again.** We can develop a new feeling of normality and a different way of living. Have a look at the diagrams below.



The first diagram has a pure blue circle showing loss. **There's no space for enjoyment.** This is how loss feels for many of us in the early stages. It feels like this has taken over our life,



The middle diagram shows how over time, our feelings and memories of loss stay the same size. But a different normality can start to grow around it and **make room for enjoyment.**



The final diagram that we may never feel the memory of our loss getting any smaller, even many years later. **But life can grow again around the feeling of loss.**



What can help us feel better after loss?

There's no magic solution for coping with loss – sometimes we might wonder if we'll ever feel better. We may sometimes feel like we're going backwards and not making any progress. It's important to remember that although these feelings are real and intense, they do slowly get better.

There are things that you can do to help make the journey a little bit easier.

Here are some things you could try:

- **Talk to people you trust.** This could be family, friends and people you live with. Try explaining the way you feel. When you're ready, sharing happy memories with people close to you is a really good way of coping with loss.
- **Spend time with others.** If talking is difficult, just spending time with people you trust can often help. When you do this, you might naturally find a comfortable time to talk.
- **Exercise.** Doing physical activity not only is good for your health, but it also releases hormones in your body that can help to lift your mood. Start with something small and build up.
- **Hobbies and activities.** Doing something you enjoy, like reading books or listening to music can help take your mind off things and help you relax.
- **Eat healthy food.** You might feel tempted to eat comfort food, but eating healthily can improve the way you feel in your body and mind.
- **Faith and religion.** If you're religious, you may want to get support from someone in your faith. This could be a religious leader, or someone from your place of worship who you trust.
- **Relaxation.** Practise some relaxation techniques. You can find examples of breathing exercises in our **Mindfulness and relaxation ideas worksheet** –ask your practitioner for a copy.
- **Give back.** Doing some volunteering or raising money for charity can be a great way of coping with your loss. Especially if you do a challenge or raise money in memory of who or what you lost.

Whatever you choose to do, be patient with yourself. Allow yourself to feel whatever you need to feel.

“The secret of my struggles was weighing down on me like a ton of bricks, and I decided I had to tell someone.”



Online resources

- **Help 2 Make Sense** is a tool run by Winston's Wish – a charity helping children and young people going through loss and grief.
help2makesense.org
- **Child Bereavement UK** helps children, young people, parents and families after the death of someone close.
childbereavementuk.org
- **Hope Again** provides information, resources and support for young people coping after the death of someone close. Also available in Welsh.
hopeagain.org.uk
- **Cruse** provides bereavement support and have a section supporting children and young people on their website.
cruse.org.uk/get-support/supporting-children-and-young-people
- **Young Minds** helps children and young people with their mental health and wellbeing.
youngminds.org.uk



Exercise



Describing what you feel

We may feel many different emotions when we're going through loss, which can be confusing. But understanding all our different feelings can be a useful start.

Remember: it's common for us to experience very difficult feelings when we're going through loss. If you're feeling like you can't cope, talk to your practitioner, a friend, relative or trusted adult.

In each of the thought bubbles on these pages, write 1 or 2 words to describe a feeling you have. For example, you might write **very sad, worried, guilty** or **numb**. You might find some more words that can help in our **Describing feelings** worksheet.

You don't have to write in every thought bubble, just fill as many as you like. You might notice they're all different sizes. If it would help, you can:

- Put your strongest feelings in the bigger bubbles
- Put your less strong feelings in the smaller bubbles

Afterwards, you could talk through all the bubbles with your practitioner.



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