



An Unexpected Death

Handout for Students

We all carry on day by day managing life's ordinary ups and downs, keeping things more or less on track. There are some things that we know we can count on: our basic needs are generally met, we have people around us who know us well, we have a routine and purpose to our day and most of the time we can take a sense of safety for granted.

When something very unexpected does happen such as the death of a young person, it can catch by surprise and can momentarily turn our world upside down. Our sense of what was known, familiar and safe suddenly changes. Many different thoughts and feelings are likely to come and go. For a while after hearing the news we can be very stirred up. Sleep and appetite might be affected as well as concentration and focus. Common reactions that everyone can experience regardless of age are listed below. **Young Minds** provides more information that you might find helpful so do check out their website as well: [Dealing with grief and loss | Mental health advice | YoungMinds](#)

Common Reactions to Unexpected News

Shock: The news of a sudden death always comes as a shock. In addition to facing the loss, it reminds us that time is limited for us all. Death is part of life, yet we rarely have to think about it.

Numbness: The shock can result in cutting off from feeling and walking around as if in a daze.

Fear: We might wonder, 'what if something like this happens to me or my family or someone else I know?'

Anxiety and Panic: We may find we can't get the idea of death out of minds, leaving us feeling highly anxious and unable to concentrate on simple everyday tasks.

Feeling vulnerable: Regardless of our age, a sudden death can leave us feeling vulnerable, even like a small child again.

Anger: Questions such as 'Why did this have to happen? A young person dying is so cruel. Only older people should pass away!' This can lead to strong feelings of anger.

None of us can be fully protected from life's more shocking experiences. When a tragedy occurs, it is important to share what we're going through with someone who can listen and understand. The **A Space for Support** team is in school to help. Speak to your Head of Year if you would like to be offered a **Time to Talk** session. You can also use one of the helplines listed on the handout entitled 'Free Confidential help Outside of School'. No one needs to alone with their thoughts and feelings. There is always someone who can offer support.



Free Confidential Help Outside of School

Some young people find it easier to talk to someone outside of school. Everyone can feel a little uncertain or anxious about speaking to a stranger but don't let this stop you. Young people who have tried using helplines have given us very positive feedback on their experience. Calls are free so never hesitate to ring!

FREE CONFIDENTIAL HELPLINES

Childline on 0800 1111 Don't be put off by the name. Childline is called this simply to differentiate it from adult helplines. Childline counsellors take calls 24 hours a day, 7 days a week from children and young people under 19. Childline counsellors are also available to speak to online through 1-2-1 chat and via email.

Samaritans on 116 123 Anyone can ring the Samaritans, regardless of age. Whatever you are facing, a Samaritan will face it with you. Their phonenumber is also open 24 hours a day.

SANeline on 0300 304 7000 Saneline counsellors are available to speak to you every day between 6-11pm.

You can also contact the services below both of which have webchat/text. They also publish material on many topics to do with mental health:

Shout! <https://giveusashout.org/about-us/about-shout/> Text 85258 any time of day or night

The Calm Zone <https://www.thecalmzone.net/get-support> Their helpline and live chat is open 5pm-midnight daily

IN A CRISIS?

If you are in crisis and there is no one available to help, please:

- Contact your GP as soon as possible.
- Ring the GP out of hours service: NHS 111
- Go to your local Accident and Emergency department (A&E). There will be staff on duty 24 hours who are trained to listen and understand. (If you cannot go on your own, ask a family member or friend to take you there).
- If you are unable to get to A & E at your local hospital, and all other options have not worked, call 999 for an ambulance.