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Coping with the Death of a Parent (for adults)

“Every day I think about my mum and I miss her so much and wish she were here. As I’ve got older I have learned that it is ok to talk about my feelings and remember the happy times that we had. I have begun to understand that her alcohol problem was like an illness. She wouldn’t want me to be sad and she did love me.” Nicky

“Grieving for her was as much about understanding her alcoholism as it was about coming to terms with losing her.” James

Not everyone with a drink problem dies from alcohol-related issues but, sadly this can happen. Knowing this can be worrying for all family members. The idea of a parent dying is frightening for most people, and when alcohol is involved it can bring up a range of difficult feelings.

Feelings of abandonment, anger, relief, blame, guilt and many other emotions may be present. Sometimes people feel it would be better if their parent died to end their suffering, but then feel guilty for having these thoughts.

The death of a parent with alcohol problems may also create tension and conflict for the rest of the family with many unanswered questions. When the family is unable to talk openly about issues, it makes it harder for them to support each other at difficult times.

Whether a parent dies from alcohol-related issues, suicide or something unrelated, we are here to listen. Remember, you are not to blame for what has happened. It is not your fault.

Talking can help, be it with friends and family, with Nacoo’s volunteer helpline counsellors or another agency. You are not alone, Nacoo is here to help. If you want someone to talk to, you can always call Nacoo on 0800 358 3456 or email us on helpline@nacoo.org.uk. You can tell us as much or as little as you want.

Listed below are other organisations offering support for people who have been bereaved. Many of their websites give further information and advice, and also suggest books that may be helpful.

Bereavement support

Cruse Bereavement Care www.cruse.org.uk
Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide <https://uksobs.org/>
DrugFAM www.drugfam.co.uk
Winston’s Wish www.winstonswish.org.uk
NHS Choices <https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/bereavement/Pages/bereavement.aspx>