



# Bereavement Following Substance Use



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# Common complexities with DRD

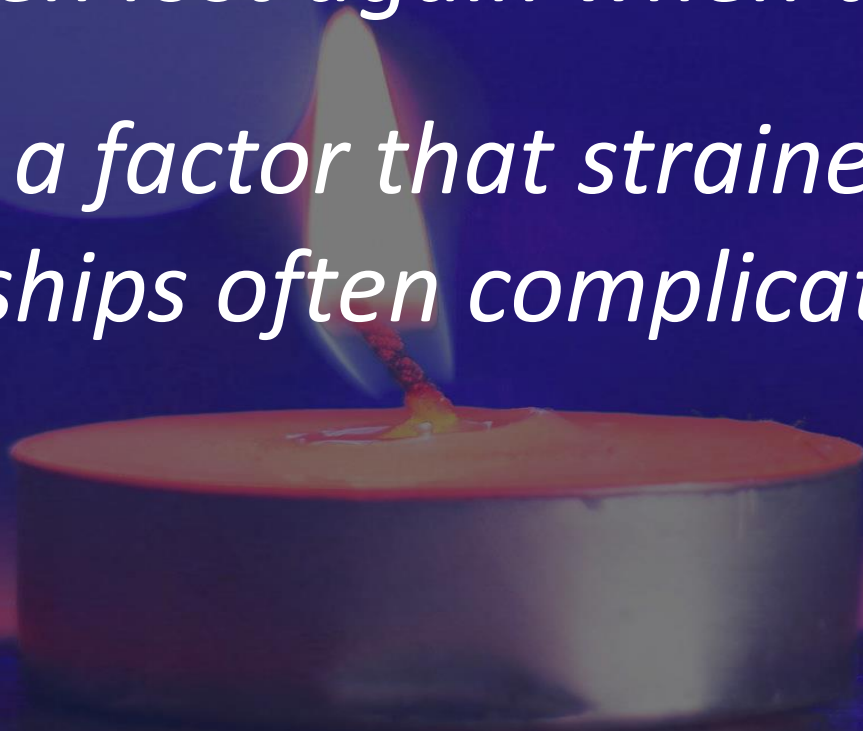
- Premature death
- Circumstances of the death
- Feelings of guilt
- Difficult relationship
- Loss of hope
- Involvement with police
- Media coverage



# “Double Bereavement”

*A family member may feel they lost their loved one to drugs and alcohol first – maybe years ago – and then lost again when the person dies.*

*It is also a factor that strained or broken relationships often complicate the grieving process.*





# “Disenfranchised Grief”



- Grief that goes ‘unacknowledged’ by society.
- The feeling of being ‘deprived’ of the right to grieve.
- Isolation may be especially acute if the bereaved person perceives others’ to be uncaring or judgemental.
- Stigma around substance use compounds this.

*“I felt as though I had to hide the feelings of hurt and utter grief and despair that was tearing me apart as it made others around me uncomfortable. I felt if I told people about how my son died they looked at me thinking – what else did you expect. I have a lot of friends and family but felt like no one understood me and that’s a very lonely place to be”*

# Bereaved through substance use

## Key Messages

- Show kindness and compassion.
- Language is important.
- Every bereaved person is an individual.
- Everyone can make a contribution.
- Working together.



# Language is important

- Avoid labels that define people by their behaviour- alcoholic, addict, etc.
- Scottish Drugs Forum (SDF) Glossary of terms- available online



# When supporting children and young people

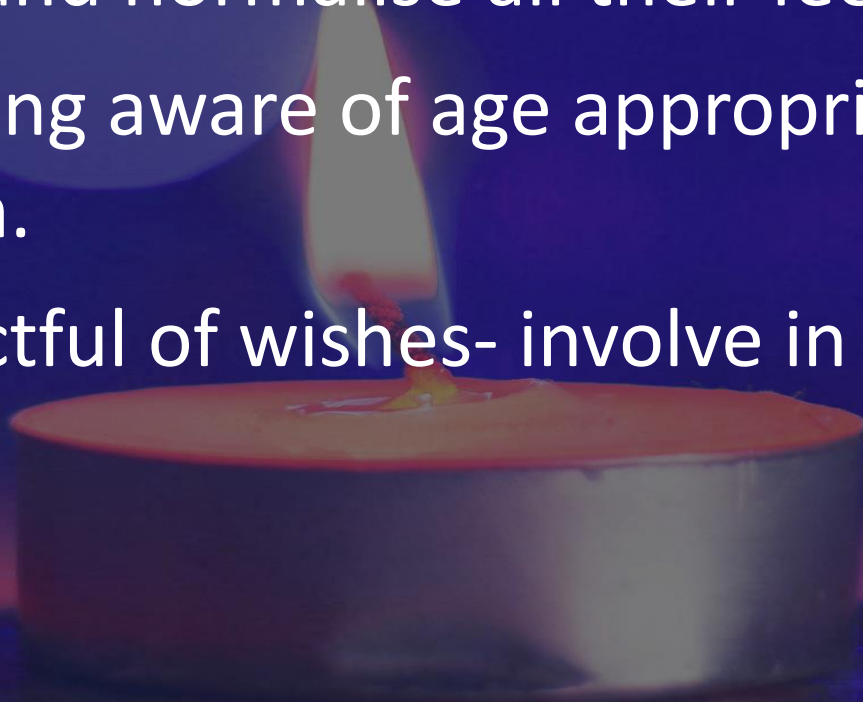
## Considerations

- Quality of relationship before death
- Commonly a grieving child won't go to other grieving family members
- Siblings will often respond differently- caring roles, etc.
- Guilt vs. relief
- School (pastoral care/guidance teachers) and friendships play important part in identifying behaviour changes



# When supporting children and young people

- Take their lead- don't force them to talk if they don't want to but let them know you are available.
- Be patient and listen.
- Validate and normalise all their feelings.
- While being aware of age appropriate language, be honest about the death.
- Be respectful of wishes- involve in funeral arrangements, etc.





**Scottish Families**  
Affected by Alcohol & Drugs

**HELPLINE**

- Free, confidential helpline offering listening support and signposting.
- Contact options available: Phone, Webchat and email.
- Online professional referral route via website



**Scottish Families**  
Affected by Alcohol & Drugs

**TELEHEALTH**

- 6 sessions of one-to-one Virtual support via phone, webchat or skype.
- Listening support and practical advice (CRAFT) on how to respond to a loved ones substance use



**Scottish Families**  
Affected by Alcohol & Drugs

**BEREAVEMENT**

- National bereavement service offering bereavement support.
- 6 sessions of bereavement counselling with a local, qualified counsellor



## Helpline

08080 10 10 11

helpline@sfad.org.uk

## Website

www.sfad.org.uk



@ScotFamADrugs



/ScottishFamiliesAffectedByDrugs



@ScotFamADrugs