

## How do Brake support suddenly bereaved children and families?

Jack Kushner, victim support events and marketing officer, Brake

*“Since the death of my fiancée I have received invaluable support and can honestly say that had I not, I really don’t know what I would be doing now.”*

*“We wouldn’t have survived as a family without you. Knowing you were on the end of the phone when we needed you was what kept us going.”*



## Brake's support team



Three key ways Brake ensure that suddenly bereaved people receive the help they need:



## Brake's support literature

- Well-written, up-to-date information about the emotional and procedural aftermath of a road crash
- Distributed mainly by police forces, so that people receive it when they need it
- Vital contact details for support services





# What does the Brake bereavement guide contain?

Sections on:

- Important contacts and notes
- What happens now? (initial procedures)
- Practical issues
- Criminal prosecutions
- Court procedures
- Claiming compensation





**open 10am to 4pm Mon to Fri**  
**helpline@brake.org.uk**

## Brake's helpline



- Fully quality accredited by the Helplines standard
- For anyone in the UK bereaved or seriously injured in a road crash, their friends, families and professionals working with them

We can't support:

- Drivers who caused a crash (unless they are themselves bereaved or injured)
- Witnesses
- Under 16s (although we can provide guidance and signposting for adults caring for affected under 16s)

A vertical yellow poster with a blue rectangular box at the top. The text in the blue box reads: "Support for you from a charity when the worst happens". Below this, in smaller text, it says: "If you have been bereaved or seriously injured by a road crash, or you are supporting someone who has, the charity Brake is here to help. Turn over to find out how." At the bottom, it says: "Call the Brake helpline 0808 8000 401 or email [helpline@brake.org.uk](mailto:helpline@brake.org.uk)". The Brake logo is at the bottom left, and a "Free" logo with a signal icon is at the bottom right.

Support for you  
from a charity  
when the  
worst happens

If you have been bereaved  
or seriously injured by  
a road crash, or you are  
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**Brake is here to help.**  
Turn over to find out how.

Call the Brake helpline  
**0808 8000 401**  
or email [helpline@brake.org.uk](mailto:helpline@brake.org.uk)

**Brake**  
the road safety charity

**Free**  
from most networks

## Brake's helpline – caller feedback



*"I can't tell you how much your support has meant. I think you saved my life, because when I first called I was in such a state and you calmed me down and helped me to know I could get through this. You'll never know what a difference it's made to me knowing you were there. I wouldn't be here today without you."*

*"Hearing from one of your volunteers through the 'I've been there' service gave me hope that I might be able to start to enjoy life again."*

*"I would like to thank all the staff at Brake for the care and understanding, and listening to me when times have been really tough. It's 12 weeks since our son's fatal crash and I don't know how I could have managed without your help through this very tough period. I would like to thank the helpline staff for all their professionalism and help."*



# Sudden, training and events:



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## Sudden death is horrific

People bereaved by sudden death suffer terribly. They are often left isolated, bewildered and traumatised, and need support to help them cope.



## Join Sudden



Sudden helps support people bereaved by sudden death.

Join our free mailing list for global research, news, events and updates.

[Sign up now](#)

Sudden is an initiative run by the charity Brake, sharing global best practice, research and resources among professionals and carers working with suddenly bereaved people.

Our website has resources for bereaved people and carers, and we provide training events for victim support professionals, practitioners and members of the police.

## Training opportunities:

Upcoming events in 2017 include:

Supporting bereaved people with additional needs  
Wednesday 19 July 2017, 2pm - 3.30pm BST, online

Supporting the supporter: vicarious trauma and support needs  
Thursday 21 September 2017, 2pm – 3.30pm GMT, online

Details on all of our upcoming seminars and webinars are available at:  
<http://suddendeath.org/events>



# Sudden resources for professionals

**Best practice guidance**

## Early interventions following traumatic bereavement

A 'traumatic bereavement' is such when the loss is sudden, violent or unexpected; for example, a road traffic collision, suicide or homicide. The experience is terrifying and shocking; individuals cannot prepare for, or protect themselves from, the event.

Many traumatically bereaved people find their profound shock, loss and grief is compounded by a lack of help at this terrible time. They need early support, information and advice to help them cope, understand the reactions they are experiencing, and make sense of what has happened. Accessing early support following a traumatic bereavement can make a significant difference to someone's long-term recovery. This report explores common reactions to traumatic bereavement and how they develop; the role of assessment; and some strategies to manage the challenges that arise as a consequence.

**Meet the expert:**  
**Stephen Regel OBE**  
Principal psychotherapist and director, Centre for Trauma, Resilience and Growth  
Stephen.Regel@nottingham.ac.uk



Stephen Regel is director of the Centre for Trauma, Resilience and Growth, Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust, honorary professor at Nottingham University, and senior fellow of the Institute of Mental Health, Nottingham. He has more than 30 years' experience working with victims of trauma and traumatic bereavement. His time is divided between clinical and teaching activities. Since 2005, he has been a member of the British Red Cross Psychosocial Support Team, assisting UK nationals affected by incidents abroad. He is the co-author (with Stephen Joseph), of Post-Traumatic Stress: the facts (Oxford University Press). He was awarded an OBE in 2013 for services to victims of trauma.

### Common reactions following a traumatic bereavement

People who are traumatically bereaved commonly experience a range of reactions, which can include:

- sadness, anger and rage, shock, or numbing;
- guilt;
- pervasive fear of anticipated violence toward self/others, sense of vulnerability;
- compulsive behaviours of self-protection;
- compulsive need for tangible reassurance of the presence and safety of other family members;
- behaviours and emotions directed towards retribution;

**About this report**  
This guidance report is produced by Sudden, a not for profit initiative helping suddenly bereaved people.



The report is one of a series aimed at professionals and other carers providing support to suddenly bereaved people. The research findings and care recommendations in this report are obtained from a 'meet the expert' seminar held in September 2013, co-ordinated by Sudden and led by psychotherapist Stephen Regel OBE. Sudden thanks Shoosmiths for sponsoring the seminar.

**Sign up to Sudden**  
If you have not already done so, sign up to Sudden to receive access to other reports in the series, e-bulletins about sudden bereavement, and info about our forthcoming events on sudden bereavement. Sign up at [www.sudden.org](http://www.sudden.org).



• reconstructed memories of an event not witnessed;

• difficulty sleeping, impaired concentration, irritability, or

• mental and behavioural avoidance of me associated with the circumstances of the well as places, people or activities that memory of the event.

These feelings and reactions are distressing normal reactions to the abnormal situation bereavement. Although they are common, people experience them in different ways by circumstances and experiences. For example, extent of reactions can be affected by the deceased and relationship with surviving nature of the death, degree and impact of involvement; or the involvement of other as including healthcare professionals, police justice system.

Families affected by traumatic bereavement isolated and stigmatised. Bereavement and affect members of the same family in different ways. Different family members may well react to find various ways of coping, which can disrupt family dynamic and cause greater problems in the term aftermath.

In some cases, more complex problems such as traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can develop. PTSD is a chronic and disabling condition which can be intractable if help is not offered in within a exposure to a traumatic event. While this is associated with people who witnessed a traumatic death, it is also possible for people to develop after learning second-hand of the death of through violent or unexpected circumstance.



**Best practice guidance**

## Supporting suddenly bereaved children and young people

Produced by



**Brake**  
the road safety charity

Through its initiative:



**Sudden**  
Supporting people after sudden death

Supported by



**Slater Gordon**  
Lawyers

This report highlights research and best practice as presented at two Brake seminars run through its Sudden initiative, on supporting suddenly bereaved children and young people, in October and November 2014. The seminars were sponsored by Slater and Gordon Lawyers. This report is produced for the benefit of Sudden subscribers and event participants.

To subscribe to Brake's Sudden initiative for free, and receive regular e-bulletins with the latest research and initiatives relevant to caring for people bereaved by sudden death, as well as updates and discounts on events and resources, go to [sudden.org](http://www.sudden.org).

- Guidance papers on support for bereaved children and young people and also best practice in assisting bereaved adults
- 'Meet the Expert' papers with academics and practitioners like Professor Steve Regel and David Trickey
- All free to access or download

Access our reports from: <http://www.suddendeath.org/help-for-professionals/papers-and-reports>



## Sudden bereavement: online guidance for carers

This page contains links to Guidance Reports written by Sudden to assist carers of suddenly bereaved people.



### **A traumatic and challenging experience**

An overview of how sudden deaths are unique, but share traumatic and challenging elements for bereaved people



### **The early days and weeks: dealing with the shock and grief**

An overview of responses that commonly follow a sudden death, including shock and grief, and appropriate care to ensure suddenly-bereaved people feel safe and supported during this challenging time.



### **After a month: identifying and helping people with traumatic grief responses and post-traumatic stress**

An overview of traumatic grief and post-traumatic stress responses that continue beyond a month for many suddenly bereaved people, and appropriate treatment of these debilitating conditions to enable a return to a full and happy life.



### **Viewing the body**

How to give suddenly bereaved people information and advice to help them decide whether or not to view a body, and ensure any viewing is a long-term positive experience

# Resources and guides for suddenly bereaved people



## Coping with grief when someone you love dies suddenly

Author: Mary Williams OBE

The printing of this book is kindly funded by  
Mazars Charitable Trust

Emotions and feelings 4

### I can't believe it has happened

It is common to feel as if it has not really happened – to expect a person who has died to walk through the door or call on the phone. It is common to find yourself talking about a person as if they are still alive.

It can be particularly hard to bear each morning when waking up and realising it is true. It may seem so unfair. 'Why has this happened to me?' is a common thought.

### I feel helpless

It is common to feel helpless, bewildered, powerless and overwhelmed. This can be upsetting and debilitating.

It may be hard to get up and get on with normal activities.

You may also find yourself making simple mistakes when doing the simplest things.

It is wise to avoid high risk activities such as driving or using dangerous machinery, or be extra careful if you feel you have to do these things.

### Contents

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**Emotions and feelings** p3

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**Getting through each day** p11

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**Getting help from others** p21



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### Help for adults

Help for children

Bereavement directory

Being suddenly bereaved is a shattering experience. If you are bereaved or work with suddenly bereaved people, you can use Sudden's online guide on coping with sudden death below. This has been prepared based on best practice guidance from bereavement and trauma academics and practitioners.

You can also **download the PDF** or order free printed copies of our guide about coping with sudden death on our **online shop**.

### Coping with Sudden Death

♥ **At the beginning: coping with the shock**  
This page gives advice on coping with the shock when you find out that someone close to you has suddenly died.

♥ **The first few weeks: challenging thoughts and reactions**  
This page helps you understand the difficult, and challenging, thoughts and reactions you may suffer from in the first weeks of your bereavement.

♥ **The first few weeks: advice on coping**  
This page provides straightforward advice on how to cope with difficult thoughts and reactions during the first weeks of your bereavement.

♥ **After a month: seeking help for traumatic grief and post-traumatic stress**  
Some people recover fully and quickly. But it is normal for many people to suffer continued reactions. Learn about these reactions and seek help.

♥ **Procedures and paperwork**  
A sudden death is accompanied by often unfamiliar procedures, at a difficult time. This page helps you prepare for them.



## Someone has died suddenly

Alongside our support literature for adults and resources for professionals, Brake also has a book available for bereaved children.

Our 'Someone has died suddenly' book features two characters, Amy and Tom, who have been suddenly bereaved.

It helps suddenly bereaved children of all ages through their terrible shock and grief and helping them to recover and lead full and happy lives.



# Someone has died suddenly

### Introducing Amy and Tom

The book is narrated by two children – Amy and Tom – who have both been bereaved suddenly and are recovering from their grief. Many children do not know anyone else who has been bereaved, and this can make them feel isolated. The characters Tom and Amy can help them feel they are not alone. Through simple actions Tom and Amy illustrate and describe a range of emotions from anger and sadness, to feeling better.


Often, Tom and Amy are pictured doing ordinary, every-day things, such as eating cornflakes, walking to school, and even bouncing on space hoppers. These are things that a child can relate to, and which show that bereaved children can have fun too.

**The children's book is for all children, whatever their age.**

The book works on different levels for children of different ages – older children can read the text and younger children can look at the colourful images and listen to the descriptions read by the parent or carer.

It is very important that the book appeals to children of different ages. This is because there is often more than one bereaved child in a family unit. It is very appropriate to read the book with a group of siblings.

Grieving children should not be talked down to, or kept in the dark.  
They should be given the opportunity to ask questions and share their feelings.



The book encourages discussion and honesty between children and adult carers, using simple language and an open tone. The book includes:


- Opportunities for adult carers to share information about what has happened
- Questions for the children, to encourage them to share their feelings and thoughts
- Opportunities for children to write down memories and carry out activities
- A promise for adult carers and children to read and sign, to enable them to support each other through their grief

These are simple ways to help children in distress to share emotions and gain support.

### Your well-being is important too.


**If you are a parent** and have suffered the same bereavement, you should give your own emotional needs as much priority as a child's emotional needs. You will be better able to support your child or children and give them a happy home environment if you are recovering from your own trauma. Go to page 40 of the book to find out how to access support for yourself through the NHS, privately or through a charity. Depending on the details of your bereavement, there may be other help available to you locally that is not listed on this page – ask your GP or call a general support charity such as The Samaritans (116 123) or Cruse Bereavement Care (0800 808 1677) for help and more contacts.

**If you are a professional** then you may find yourself emotionally affected by the bereavement of a child or children in your care. It is helpful for you to have a regular confidential conversation with someone who can provide you with a listening ear and professional support. This could be an experienced colleague or an independent professional such as a therapist, depending on your working environment. Hopefully, your employment policy includes this kind of support. If not, ask for the policy to be rewritten so this support is included.




## Helping suddenly bereaved children


Your guide to using the book  
'Someone has died suddenly'




Produced by

Supported by

 **Sudden**  
Supporting people after sudden death

 **Brake**  
the road safety charity

 **Funeralcare**

Visit [www.suddendeath.org](http://www.suddendeath.org)

The colourful text is also accompanied by a guide for adult carers.

These texts are free to order through our website: <https://shop.brake.org.uk/>

# Keeping up to date with Sudden



## Dying Matters Awareness Week - What can you do?

Monday, 08 May 2017 Stephanie Owens Bereavement organisations 491 Hits 0 Comments



*The period following any death is a difficult time, but a sudden death is particularly devastating for the loved ones of the person who has died. Those grieving find their lives have changed greatly, with no warning, and often little preparation. All deaths have an impact, but a sudden death brings its own unique set of issues.*

*Dying Matters Awareness Week 2017 focuses on the theme 'What can you do?'. We are encouraging people to offer their support to people who have been bereaved – relatives, friends and colleagues – by helping them in practical ways and listening to them when they are ready to talk.*

<http://www.suddendeath.org/blog>



### New on the Sudden blog:

Our latest post on the Sudden blog comes from Stephanie Owens, communications and marketing officer at Dying Matters. Stephanie gives an overview of the theme of this year's Dying Matters Awareness Week, #WhatCanYouDo. Her blog highlights the importance of talking openly about bereavement, and includes advice on practical ways that relatives, friends and colleagues can support bereaved people.

GET INVOLVED: [Read the post here](#)



### New webinar resources

Presentations and recordings from our **'Bereavement under the spotlight: supporting people suddenly bereaved in high-profile cases'** webinar are now available on our website. This event featured an extensive session from expert academic and former journalist Dr Sallyanne Duncan, senior lecturer at the University of Strathclyde. Content covered within the webinar included a discussion of the pros and cons of engaging with the media, and advice and guidance on how bereaved people can best deal and interact with the media.

GET INVOLVED: [Catch up with the webinar and download the presentation](#)



[@Sudden\\_Brake](https://twitter.com/Sudden_Brake)

<http://www.suddendeath.org/join-sudden/>



## Contact us

We're always happy to hear from professionals. You can contact us with queries about our seminars, conferences and resources using the details below.

Jack Kushner, victim support events and marketing officer.



T: +44 (0)1484 559909

E: [jkushner@brake.org.uk](mailto:jkushner@brake.org.uk)

Contact Jack with queries about our events and resources, and if you can assist with marketing our activities or are interested in working with Sudden.

Follow us on Twitter: [@Sudden\\_Brake](https://twitter.com/Sudden_Brake)

Join our LinkedIn group: [Sudden LinkedIn](#)