

The Death of an Adult Child



All bereaved parents suffer extreme sorrow and loss, however, there are additional factors to consider following the death of an adult child:

- As well as the loss of the future that follows the death of any child, parents of an adult child have lost a long term relationship too
- Others may make the assumption that because the child was grown up the pain of losing them is less. They forget that our child will always be our child
- The parent will experience the feeling of waste and futility at a life cut short
- Where the adult child has had their own family the parent may already have adjusted to their moving away etc, but if the child has been dependent through illness or other difficulties they will have been the centre of the parents' life for many years
- Where there has been a breakdown of relationships between adult child and parent, the resultant grief will be complex / complicated
- Where parents are elderly, role reversal may have occurred and the parent has become dependent on the child. Future concerns about their own well being may intrude on their grief
- Older parents may be culturally less comfortable with expressing their grief
- Survivor guilt may be particularly intense in elderly parents since they have had a long and full life
- There may be grandchildren to take care of at a time when emotional resources are depleted
- If the child was an only child, the parent may wonder whether they are still a parent
- No matter what age the child is, death of a child defies the laws of nature, for no one expects to live on after their children
- In time the parent will be able to draw on a wealth of memories of their child, that the parent of a younger child would not have

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