**How to help a bereaved parent adjust to living alone**

Returning to your home after losing a partner is one of the hardest things that people who have been bereaved have to face. If your parent has recently lost their partner, don’t be surprised if they need your support. Returning to a home that was once full of memories and now seems eerily quiet, mixed with anxiety over living independently can be hard to deal with. Here are some ways that you can help them to readjust and begin to cope with living alone.

**Emotional support**

Adjusting to life after losing a partner is never easy. People often find that they need lots of support to help understand and process their emotions.

Talking may be helpful and can allow them to work through the feelings they are having and to understand how the grieving process works. But, not everyone feels comfortable talking to family and friends, so always be respectful if they say they would prefer not to talk about it. They may be more open to talking to someone neutral like a bereavement counsellor.

The loss of a partner is among one of the most stressful events anyone will experience in their lives and many people will experience intense feelings of loneliness. Many people in relationships share the same social circles and hobbies and some spend very little time with anyone outside of their immediate family.

It’s important to keep a close eye on your loved one during this time, offer support and make them aware of the support that is available to them through their GP and charities such as [Samaritans](http://www.samaritans.org/). When they are ready you can begin to encourage them to join in with activities and hobbies that can help end their isolation.

**Practical support**

Every relationship is different, but often partners rely on each other in practical ways. For instance, if the person who passed away was the only driver in the relationship took care of finances or cooked daily meals. So when that person passes away there are some needs which have to be met.

If your bereaved parent has a large support network then now is a good time to ask around to see who can help with practical matters. This may be helping to drive them to the supermarket to do a food shop or perhaps showing them how they can do their shopping online. It might be the case that your loved one is quite capable to undertake these duties themselves, but it’s better to ask than find out later on that they are struggling.

If you parent is elderly, then you should consider whether they may need day to day help around the home and whether it is safe for them to be living alone. Simple activities like cooking, washing or even walking around their property may be much more dangerous if they is no one to call out for assistance should they have an accident.

**Nutrition**

Healthy eating is essential in ensuring physical and emotional well being so helping them to prepare a meal plan and shopping list can be important. Without a plan in place your loved one may struggle to make the right decisions over food or even find access to it.

If transport is an issue then online shopping can solve the problem of empty cupboards, but remember that some elderly people struggle with using computers. If this is the case then you may be able to give them instructions on how to complete their online shopping, or fulfil an order for them.

Alternatively, you may be able to find support from a charity like the Royal Voluntary Service who provide [‘Meals on Wheels’](http://www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/get-help/support-at-home/meals-on-wheels) services.

**Finances**

Depending on their individual needs, you may also need to provide some financial support. A good place to start is to perform a mini-audit. Find out who they bank with, what obligations they have in terms of rent, bills, credit cards, mortgages, hire purchases and other debts, where they store their paperwork and get hold of any relevant account information.

If your loved one pays their bills by visiting the post office or by cheque then you may want to suggest setting up a direct debit. This will save them time and help simplify their financial situation.

In terms of support, there are some social benefits available for elderly people such as state pensions, Personal Independence Payments and Constant Attendance Allowance. There are also schemes such as the Winter Fuel Payment, Cold Weather Payment and TV License concessions which may be able to help them save some extra money.

You can find further information about these options via the [Age UK website](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/money-matters/claiming-benefits/).

**Checking in**

It is important to provide ongoing support to your parent by checking in by phone and visiting in person to see how they are coping and to let them know you care. While they may receive lots of support around the time of the funeral this can wane over time and your support will be valuable. Equally, if you parent is not good with technology then you might want to teach them how to use a mobile phone so that they can communicate at times of their own choosing.

For further advice on understanding the grieving process and bereavement, please [click here](http://www.cravens-funerals.com/coping-with-the-loss-of-a-loved-one/) to read our article on coping with the loss of a loved one.

For help and advice on organising a funeral, please contact us on 0151 228 3900, or leave us a message through our contact us page by [clicking here](http://www.cravens-funerals.com/contact-us/).