

Walking in your shoes - finding help from people who understand

Most of us experience difficulties in our lives at one time or another, and thankfully, we can generally manage the rough times with the smooth. Even if life isn't all plain sailing, we learn that riding the big waves can help us to enjoy the calmer waters ... and the other way around!

But what of the huge, life-changing events in our family life that some of us can experience - often without warning? How can we cope then? These can leave us thinking, "Why me?" "Why us?" "Why now?"

Sue told us: "When our 18-month-old son was diagnosed with cancer, it was initially emotionally devastating. Our world was turned upside down, and we had to come to terms with the shock and the long-term implications that this would have on his life and the life of our family."

Another mum, Rachel, shared how she felt when her daughter was born: "None of my previous experience could possibly have prepared me for Nicola's birth. She came into the world ... just! 'Distressed' doesn't even come close to what we went through. My prayer was, 'Lord, let me keep her. Please let her live.'"

When faced with this kind of news, and whether or not we 'detach' and appear calm or are visibly overwhelmed, our whole mind and body reacts. There is initial shock, the adrenalin flows, and we tell ourselves it isn't real and we will wake up soon. Then, as we begin to accept that the situation isn't going to go away, we may feel as if life is on hold - that normal things can't continue to happen. We find we cannot think straight and have no idea which way to turn.

Before too long, we come to the devastating realisation that life will never be the same again.

While all this is going on in our heads, family life has to continue. We may have young children, older children in the middle of exams, or elderly relatives who need us to be strong. It can feel so

isolating, especially if we know no one else for whom this has happened. While friends and family will do their best to support us, at times we may long to connect with someone who's been there; someone who really does understand.

It is often said that if you want to truly understand someone, you must walk a mile in their shoes. That's a principle in which we strongly believe at Care for the Family and our teams of telephone befrienders all have personal experience of the areas in which they work. These volunteer befrienders are work with bereaved parents, families with children who have additional needs, and those who are widowed young in life. They are fully trained and are to offer support and understanding - they truly have walked in your shoes.

Additional Needs Support: For parents of children with additional needs



- a chance to talk openly and honestly about how life really is.

Bereaved Parent Support: For parents who have lost a son or daughter of any age and in any circumstance, and who are at any stage along their journey of grieving.

Widowed Young Support: For those whose partner died either recently or some time ago - an opportunity to talk with those who will listen and offer encouragement and support.

To find out more about any of these initiatives:

Tel: **029 2081 0800**

Email: **mail@cff.org.uk**

Web: **www.careforthefamily.org.uk**

Parent Talk Live - Helping you to be an even better parent

The problem with parenting is that normally by the time we get the hang of it - we're redundant! Parenting is a mixture of highs and lows ... and everything in between. It can bring some of life's biggest joys, but also its greatest challenges. For most of us, a bit of encouragement and a reminder that we're not alone can make a real difference.

During this event, we'll look at key issues such as communication with our children, setting boundaries, helping them grow in independence while keeping them safe and, above all, building strong bonds with them that will help us weather those teenage storms. We'll share practical tips that you can take away and put into action at home straightaway. It certainly won't be dull - there will be lots of humour and you may even shed a tear or two. The aim of this event is to have you leaving inspired and empowered as a mum or dad.



Your Family Charity

Care for the Family has been supporting and encouraging families in the UK since 1988. Its family-building events have been attended by over 320,000 people and many more have been helped through special initiatives - including stepfamilies, bereaved parents and those parenting alone. Founded by best-selling author and speaker Rob Parsons, the charity is committed to strengthening family life and helping those who face family difficulties.

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Care for the Family - A Christian response to a world of need.
Care for the Family is a charity registered in England and Wales
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