



Support Through the MAiD Journey: Grief and Bereavement Resources

Introduction

Grief is a natural response to loss and the experience of grief is different for everyone. Bereavement is the period of time after a loss when grief is experienced.

Many find that the grief process with Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) is very different than other loss they have experienced. Coming to terms with this type of loss involves learning new ways to find meaning in the loss experience, putting this into perspective and working through the journey.

We hope that you find this resource helpful, regardless of where you reside and where you find yourself on your grief journey.

Is What I Am Feeling Normal?

Family members and caregivers may:

- Feel less prepared than their loved one and struggle to accept the reality of the situation;
- Have difficulty managing their distress while trying to remain involved and supportive as they assist their loved one at end-of-life;
- Struggle with communicating their feelings to others, particularly those who may not be as understanding of MAiD;
- Have feelings of isolation and frustration;
- Feel moral distress about their loved one's decision to access MAiD;
- Find it difficult to work through their grief while also managing their regular lives.

All of the feelings above, and many others not listed, are part of the grieving process and are a natural response to the loss experienced with MAiD. If you find yourself struggling, we encourage you to seek support through the organizations listed below.

Access to Support

MAiD-specific grief and bereavement support may be limited for those without access counselling services due to cost, geographic location or fear of stigmatization.

Loved ones often find themselves in a position in which they need to teach others about MAiD before they can begin to receive the support that they are seeking to address their own feelings. Additionally, many have identified a need to justify or validate their loved one's rationale for making this choice to others.

From a spiritual perspective, family members may experience difficulty accessing support through faith-based organizations or from a faith community representative/clergy as MAiD is not supported by all denominations.

The organizations outlined in this document recognize the need for MAiD-specific support and for a sense of community for individuals with lived experience with MAiD. Access to these supports is free and they are available in a variety of formats. Other supports not included in this document may be available in your community, including private counselling and general counselling services in settings such as community health centres.

Bereaved Families of Ontario – Ottawa Region

Bereaved Families of Ontario – Ottawa Region goal is to inspire hope and transformation in people who are grieving the death of a loved one.

Contact Information

- Bereaved Families of Ontario (<http://www.bfo-ottawa.org/>)
- 211 Bronson Ave., Suite 303, Ottawa, ON
- 613-567-4278

Services Provided

- Peer support
- MAiD support group
- Support & share programs and walking group
- Seasonal programs
- Child/teen art therapy for grief

(See website for additional information)

Bridge C-14

Bridge C-14 is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing meaningful connections of support for families and loved ones throughout all stages of assisted death. Bridge C-14 is committed to creating a culture where dignity, choice, and grief are honoured and valued.

Contact Information

- Email: bridgec14org@gmail.com

Services Provided

- Resource information
- Podcasts and blog
- Facebook support group
- Meet-ups
- MAiD support group

(See website for additional information)

Dying with Dignity Canada

National Chapter

Dying With Dignity Canada is the national human-rights charity committed to improving quality of dying, protecting end-of-life rights, and helping Canadians avoid unwanted suffering.

Contact Information

- 1-800-495-6156 (toll free)
- Dying with Dignity (<http://www.dyingwithdignity.ca/>)

Services Provided

- Emotional support and bereavement counselling
 - 1-800-395-3640
 - support@dyingwithdignity.ca
- Assistance with navigating a request for MAiD
- Patient navigation booklet
- Palliative care resources
- Independent witness(es) program

(See website for additional information)

Ottawa Chapter

Contact Information

- Dying with Dignity – Ottawa Chapter (http://www.dyingwithdignity.ca/ottawa_chapter)

Services Provided

- Advanced care planning workshops
- Presentations on topics related to personal choice
- Connection to independent witness(es)
- MAiD support group

(See website for additional information)

MAiD Monthly Support Group

In response to requests in the community, Bereaved Families of Ontario – Ottawa Region, Bridge C-14 and Dying With Dignity Canada have partnered to offer a bereavement peer support group for individuals and families who have had an experience with MAiD.

For more information:

- Phone: 613-567-4278
- Email: office@bfo-ottawa.org

Additional Resources

- Canadian Virtual Hospice: My Grief (<http://www.mygrief.ca/>)
- Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: 613-238-3311
- Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868
- Tel-Aide Outaouais: 1-800-567-9699 / 613-741-6433
- Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association (<http://www.chpca.net/news-and-events/bereavementday/bereavementdayresource.aspx>)
- Kids Grief (<https://kidsgrief.ca/mod/lesson/view.php?id=281&pageid=621>)