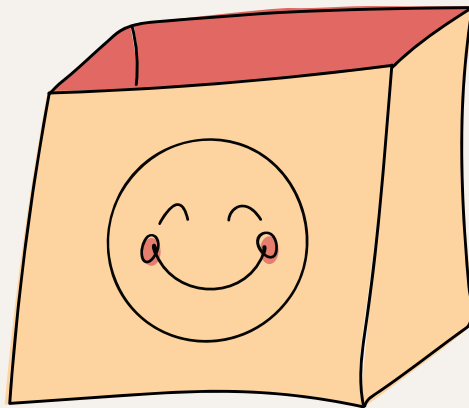
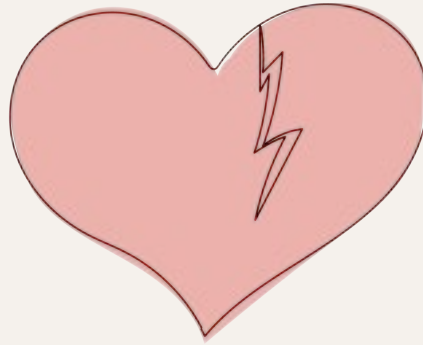


Make your happiness box: coping with change and grief



Co-designed by
St Michael's Hospice and
Little Gate Farm trainees.



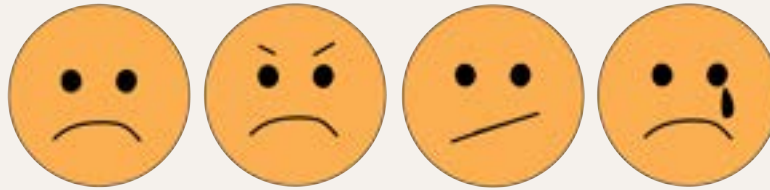


Big life changes and grief

Sometimes, big changes happen in life.

Maybe someone important to you dies, or you lose something special. Grief is the feeling you have during these times.

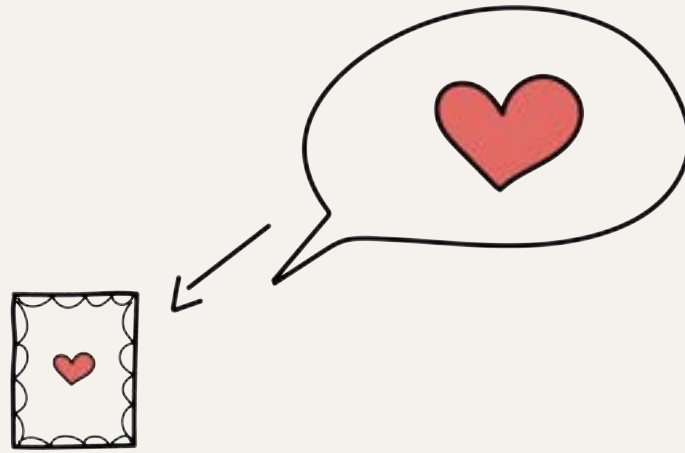
Everyone experiences grief in different ways, and that's okay.



Grief can bring many different feelings

You might feel sad, angry, confused or lonely. All feelings are okay.

Your feelings might change, and that's okay too.

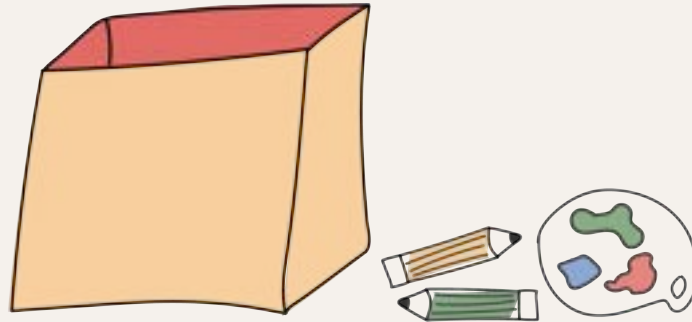


Talking about your feelings can help

Talking to someone you trust might help.

You can share how you feel or talk about what you miss. It's okay if you don't want to talk yet.

You can take your time.

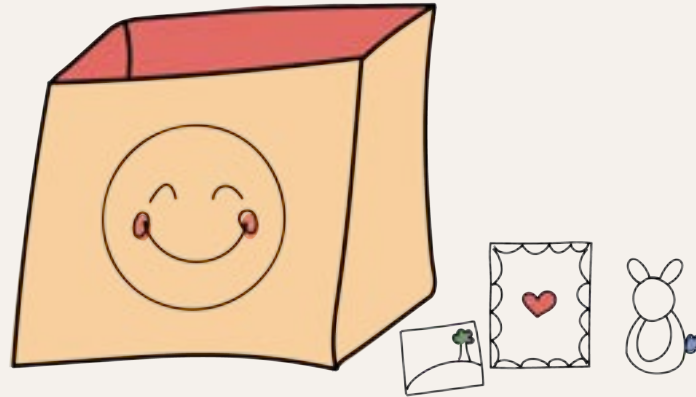


Making your happiness box is one way to cope with grief

First, find a box you like.

If you want, you can decorate it with things that make you feel calm or remind you of happy times.

If you need help, ask someone you trust.



What to put in your happiness box

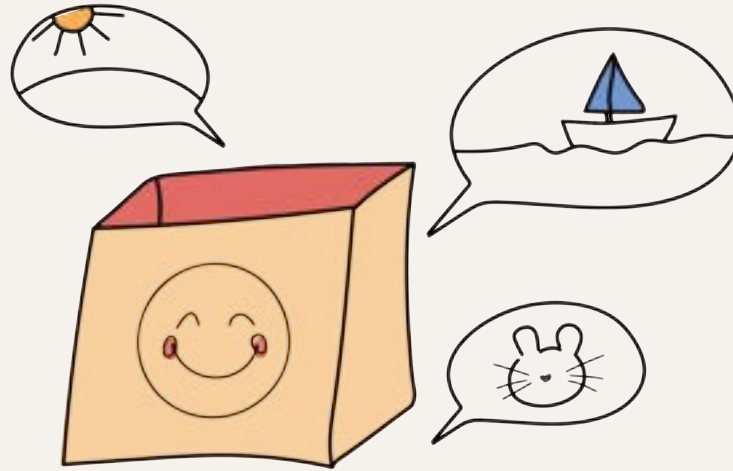
You can put special items in your happiness box, like:

A photo of someone or something you like.

A drawing or picture.

A small object.

Choose what feels special for you.

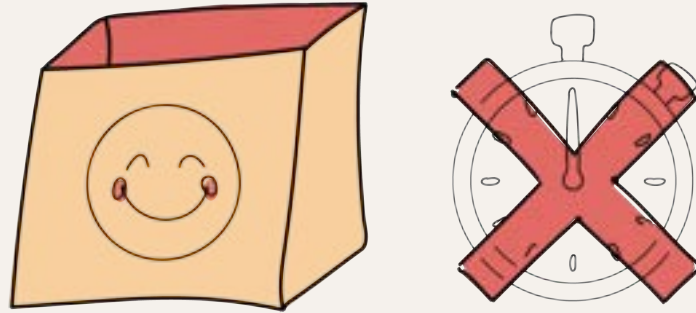


How your happiness box can help you cope with grief

If you feel grief, you can use your happiness box.

The items inside might remind you of happy times. You can also try using them to feel calm.

Everyone copes in different ways.

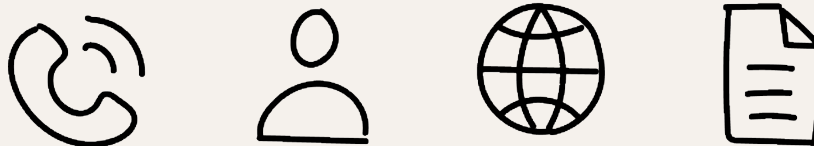


It's okay to take your time with grief

Grief is different for everyone.

There is no right or wrong way to feel.

Your happiness box is there whenever you need it.



Getting more support if you need it

You may need more support with grief, and that's okay.

You can talk to a professional if you need extra support.

You can search online for grief services or helplines to call for support.

Frequently asked questions

Q: What if I don't want to make a happiness box?

A: That's okay, the happiness box is just one way to cope with grief. You can find other ways that work for you.

Q: What if I don't know what to put in my box?

A: You can take your time. If you're not sure, you can ask someone you trust for ideas or help.

Q: What if I still feel grief even after using my happiness box?

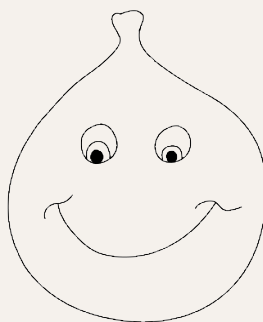
A: That's okay. You can talk to someone you trust or explore ways to feel better, like going for a walk or listening to music.

Q: Can my happiness box change over time?

A: Yes, you can add new things or take things out whenever you want. It's your box.

Date of preparation: July 2025

Stress buster activities



These activity guides show you how to make two small items that you can carry with you.

You can use these items to help you feel calmer when you are feeling stressed, anxious, or overwhelmed, especially during big changes, like when someone important to you has died.

**Co-designed by
St Michael's Hospice and
Little Gate Farm trainees.**



Little Gate Farm is a registered charity born out of a vision to enrich the lives of people with learning disabilities and autism.

Date of preparation: July 2025

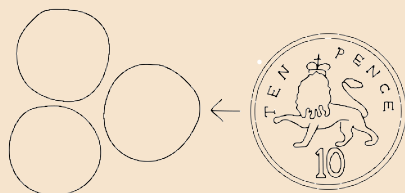
Worry clay thumb activity

Goal: make a worry clay thumb. You can press your thumb into it whenever you feel stressed or anxious.

What you need:

- Air-dry clay (three colours).

1.

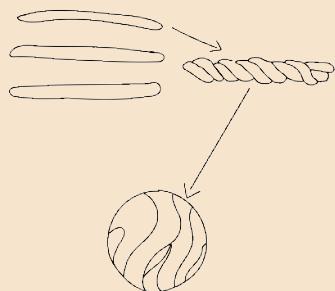


Choose up to three colours.

Roll each colour into a separate clay ball.

Together, the three balls should be slightly larger than a 10p coin.

2.



Using the palm of your hand, roll each clay ball into a worm shape.

Twist the worms together.

Shape the twisted worms into a ball.

3.



Gently press thumb down into the centre of clay ball.

Dry the clay according to the packaging instructions.

4.



Once the worry clay thumb is dry, you can gently press your thumb into it.

It can help when you're feeling stressed or anxious.

Stress ball activity

Goal: fill a balloon with flour to make a stress ball. You can squeeze it if you feel overwhelmed.

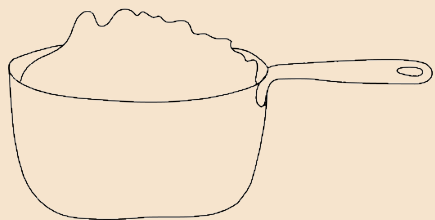
To make your stress ball you will need:

- One cup of plain flour.
- Water bottle (empty and dry).
- Funnel (if you do not have a plastic one, you can make one from paper).
- A balloon.

To decorate your stress ball you will need:

- A Sharpie pen or permanent marker.
- Craft items to decorate your stress toy e.g wool, pipe cleaners, googly eyes, stickers.
- Glue.

1.



Use one cup of flour, measured with a standard measuring cup or a small tea cup.

2.



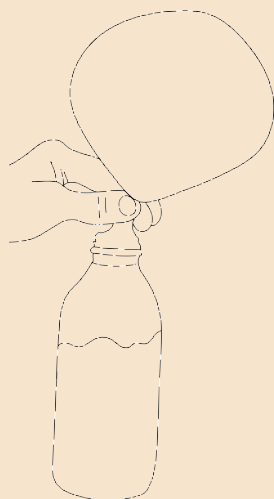
Using a funnel, pour the cup of flour into an empty water bottle.

3.



Inflate your balloon slightly to create an opening, adding just enough air inside.

4.



Stretch the opening of the balloon over the neck of the water bottle.

Then, carefully transfer all the flour from the bottle into the balloon.

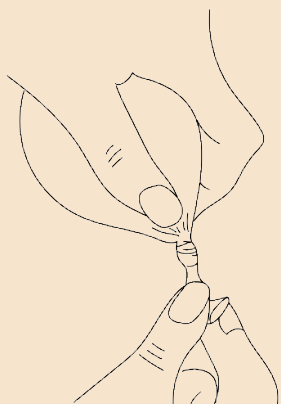
5.



After all the flour is inside the balloon, carefully remove it from the neck of the bottle to prevent spills.

Gently release a small amount of air from the balloon.

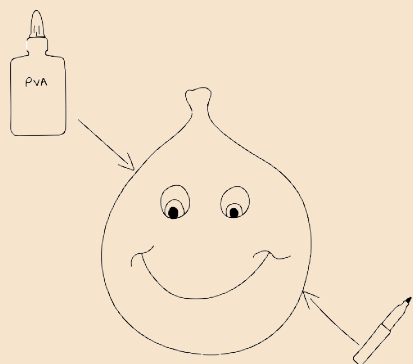
6.



Tie a knot at the opening of the balloon, ensuring it's secure.

The balloon should fit comfortably in the palm of your hand.

7.

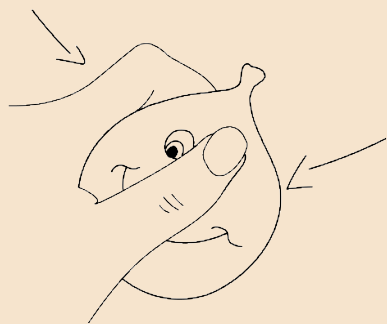


You can decorate your stress ball by drawing a face on the balloon with a permanent marker.

Or, you can glue googly eyes on the balloon.

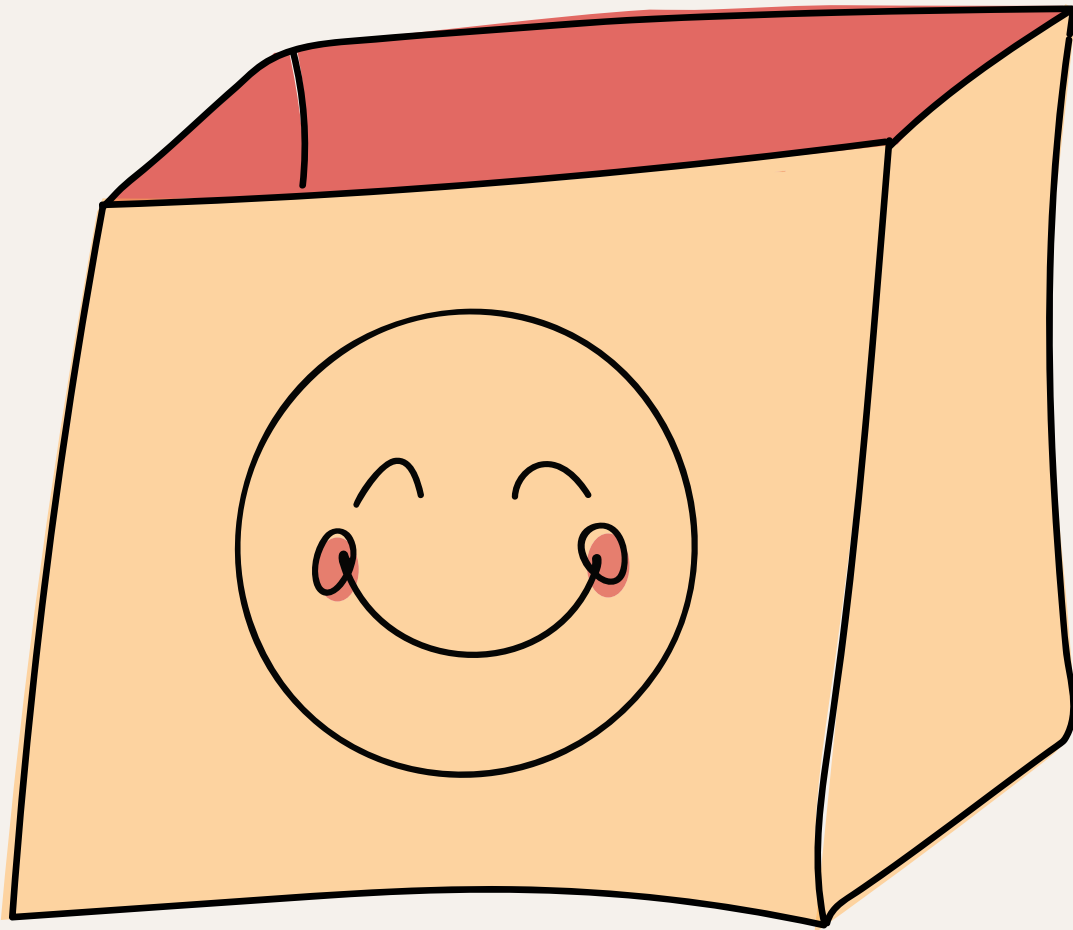
It's up to you!

8.



You can squeeze the stress ball when you feel overwhelmed.

Happiness Box workshop



A wellbeing workshop to support neurodivergent and/or individuals with learning difficulties cope with dying, death and loss.

Co-designed by St Michael's Hospice and Little Gate Farm trainees.

Little Gate Farm is a registered charity born out of a vision to enrich the lives of people with learning disabilities and autism.



Happiness Box workshop

What will happen?

People taking part will make a Happiness Box that is special to them, to help them with grief and loss. This can help them feel better and talk about their emotions.

Why are we making Happiness Boxes?

Working creatively in a supportive environment helps people understand the link between how they are feeling and the person or pet who has died. This makes it easier for those taking part to talk about dying, death, and loss.

Time

Approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes (including a 15 minute break).

Before the workshop, ask people to bring in things they like such as stress toys, DVDs, games, music or toys. Photos will do if they can't or don't want to bring the real object in.

What you'll need

- White board or large poster paper for the icebreaker task.
- Small cardboard boxes, or shoe boxes (one per person).
- Small visual aids which act as reflective tools for wellbeing. These can be photographs, memories, and/or prompts from 'easy on the i' (downloadable images from the NHS learning disabilities website).
- Sensory items (e.g. fidget toys).
- Art supplies (e.g. markers, stickers, paper, paints) for personalising the box.
- Using my Happiness Box to help with grief and loss booklet.
- Toothbrushes and hygiene items.

Part One: Welcome and Warm Up (15 minutes)

Icebreaker task

Use white board or large poster paper to create a table.
Divide the paper into four columns, each participant gets one row:

- First column: Name
 - Second column: Favourite memory
 - Third column: Favourite activity
 - Fourth column: Favourite person(s)
-

Discussion time

- What have you learned about others?
 - How can our favourite things help us?
-

Next steps...

- Link the conversation you've just had back to the Happiness Box. It's a special box containing our favourite things to help us during difficult times such as dying, death, and loss.
- Allow time for people to talk about their feelings and/or ask questions.
- Explain that everyone grieves differently and there is no right or wrong way to grieve. Each Happiness Box will be different, it is whatever works for you.
- Handout the Using my Happiness Box to help with grief and loss flashcards.
- Explain purpose of the flashcards using the workshop objective. They tell a helpful story to remind people how to create and use their own Happiness Box, to help with grief and loss.

Part Two: Decorating the Happiness Box (10 - 15 minutes)

Time to get creative

- Give out the cardboard boxes and art supplies.
- Encourage people to decorate their boxes with colours and designs which mean something to them.
- To make the workshop go smoothly, give help where needed and encourage creativity.

Break for 15 minutes (refreshments).



Part Three: Filling the Happiness Box (10 minutes)

Supporting wellbeing

- Introduce various items, photos or pictures which could support wellbeing (examples of these on page 2).
 - Talk about what these items mean and how they can bring comfort.
-

Memory sharing

- Ask people if they would like to add items that remind them of people, pets or special memories. If they feel happy doing so they can share stories about the things they choose to put in.

Part Four: Creating stress toys (10 - 15 minutes)

Introduction to stress toys

- Explain how stress toys can help when they feel worried or stressed, especially during times of grief.
-

Hands-on activity

- Guide people to make their own stress toy using balloons or clay, using the DIY stress toy resources.
 - Allow time for decoration and personalisation.
 - Discuss how they can use the stress toys to support themselves during difficult times.
 - Allow time for decoration and personalisation.
- 

Part Five: Sharing and reflection (10 minutes)

Time to share

Encourage people to share their experiences of creating their Happiness Box.

- What have I learned about myself today?
-

Reflection time (for facilitators)

- What did I learn about myself as a facilitator?
 - What will I do differently next time?
-

Follow up

Encourage people to revisit their Happiness Box regularly and think about adding new items or memories, if they would like to, in the future.

Bereavement Support in Hastings and Rother

Please note waiting lists, age restrictions, and availability may vary and are subject to change.

We suggest visiting official websites or using the contact information below to find out more.

St Michael's Hospice Bereavement Service Hastings and Rother (18+)

Website: stmichaelshospice.com

Telephone: 01424 456361

Email: bereavement@stmichaelshospice.com

Fellowship of St Nicholas (FSN) 'Dragonflies' Hastings, Rother, and Eastbourne (0 - 18)

Website: fsncharity.co.uk

Telephone: 01424855222

Email: fhamilton@fsncharity.co.uk

SCDA Bereaved by Suicide Service County wide (young people and adults).

Website: sussexcommunity.org.uk

Email: Kellie.Leyton@sussexcommunity.org.uk

Blue Cross Pet Loss Support

Website: bluecross.org.uk

Telephone: 0800 096 6606

Email: pbssmail@bluecross.org.uk

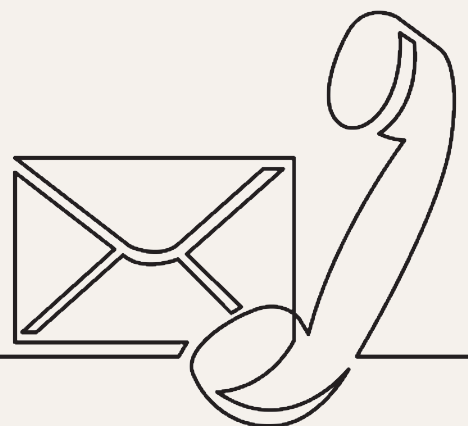
Cruse Bereavement Care

Website: cruse.org.uk

National Helpline: 0808 808 1677

Other helpful services and organisations:

- NHS Sussex
- National Autistic Society (charity)
- Little Gate Farm (charity)



Happiness Box workshop

Facilitator guide

Why are we making these boxes?

Make each box your own: Each Happiness Box will be different. It is filled with things that mean a lot to someone, including their memories, which can bring them comfort.

Taking part: Making and thinking about what goes into a Happiness Box can help you to have conversations about grief and loss.

Meaningful: The things you put in your Happiness Box can help you get through your grief and difficult feelings.

Mindfulness: Thinking about good things can help you to feel better, and the Happiness Box is something you can go back to at any time.

Memories: The Happiness Box can help you remember how you felt about who you were close to. You can sometimes feel lonely when someone dies and remembering them in this way can help you feel less alone in their grief.

Helping you to cope: During difficult times, looking at and touching things in the Happiness Box can be a healthy way to cope with feelings.

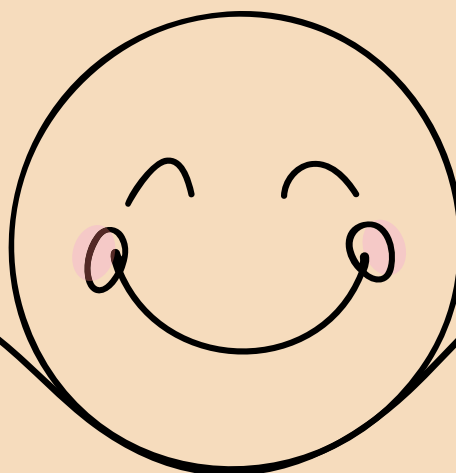
Getting ready

- Make sure you know the specific needs and preferences of the people taking part. This might include how they communicate, sensory needs and any additional support they may require.
- Make sure there is enough room for carers or support workers to help support people taking part in the activity.
- Offer the people taking part photographs of the space or/and invite them to meet facilitators before the activity, so they don't feel as stressed or anxious.
- Think about sensory elements like lighting, seating, and noise levels. Check-in with the people taking part and ask if any changes need to be made to help them.

Gentle reminders

By approaching bereavement with compassion and sensitivity, you can help meaningful conversations happen.

- Encourage respect, listening skills, and confidentiality.
- Let people know that talking about grief and loss can make you very emotional, and that is okay. Having a non-judgmental approach to people's feelings lets them know their emotions are acceptable.
- Show empathy and understanding. Repeat back what you hear to show you understand their thoughts and feelings.
- Invite people to share stories or memories. Let them know there is no right or wrong way to grieve and that it's also okay not to share, it's their choice.
- Remember grief is a unique journey and everyone experiences it differently. There's no timeline or right way to feel.
- Gently remind people taking part to take care of themselves and seek support when needed.
- Let participants know you're available for follow-up conversations or support.
- Be aware of your own history with grief and loss. It is important to look after yourself and others when approaching topics such as dying, death and loss



Community spaces in Hastings and Rother for people with learning difficulties and neurodiverse needs

These community spaces are free and open to all. Just drop in.

Eggtooth Sunday Social (free)

Neurodiverse adults 16 + (pre or post diagnosis).

Address: The Nest, 45 High Street, Hastings, TN34 3EW.

Every Sunday from 2 - 4pm.

Email: jacky@eggtooth.org.uk

Eggtooth Tuesday Parent Support Group (free)

Carers and parents supporting children with Autism and ADHD.

Address: The Nest, 45 High Street, Hastings, TN34 3EW.

Every Tuesday during the school term.

Email: amber@eggtooth.org.uk

St Michael's Hospice Thursday Coffee Stop (free)

Social with light refreshments.

Address: 25 Upper Maze Hill,

St Leonards on Sea, TN38 0LB.

Every Thursday morning.

Telephone: **01424 445177**

Email: info@stmichaelsospice.com



The community spaces listed below can be hired at a cost. Some may also require booking in advance. Please check their website for pricing and availability.

Boardgame Museum Cafe (costs vary)

Inclusive space for board games and events.

Every Wednesday to Sunday, Hastings.

The Studio, Rye (£80 per day or £40 for half days)

Includes a light lunch, refreshments and all art materials.

Address: Rye Creative Centre, New Road, Rye, TN31 7SJ.

Every weekday (apart from Tuesday).

Telephone: **07743 424438**

Email: **info@jennyedbrooke.com**

Dance for Adults (£5)

Inclusive, accessible dance sessions.

Address: Robsack Community Centre, Hastings, TN38 9TW.

Every Tuesday at Four Courts Community Centre.

Every Friday at the Hastings Centre.

Email: **dancehastings@gmail.com**

Date of preparation: July 2025

