

Sometimes we just can't push away the subject of death any longer. We find ourselves facing our own mortality, whether through our own situation or that of someone close to us. Read on for help with your thoughts and questions.

Over the last century or so, everyday life in Britain has greatly changed. Over those years the experience of death has also changed. People of previous generations were more aware than we are of death as a fact of life. Compared with them, a baby born in 21st century Britain is far less likely to die:

- At birth or giving birth;
- Before reaching adulthood;
- From many of the diseases our ancestors dreaded;
- As a result of violence;
- From complications after surgery;
- From an infection; or
- At home.

One result of these changes is that we easily avoid being reminded of death. Many of us don't even use words like "die". Instead, we say things like "pass away" or "when anything happens".

But if you know you are dying, your attitude may change. Now, you may want to talk more directly about what is going to happen to you. Aware of the remaining time being rather short, you may want to talk to someone about things you have pushed away until now, such as:

- Is there a God?
- Do heaven and hell exist?
- What will happen to my body after I die?
- Is there more to me than my body?

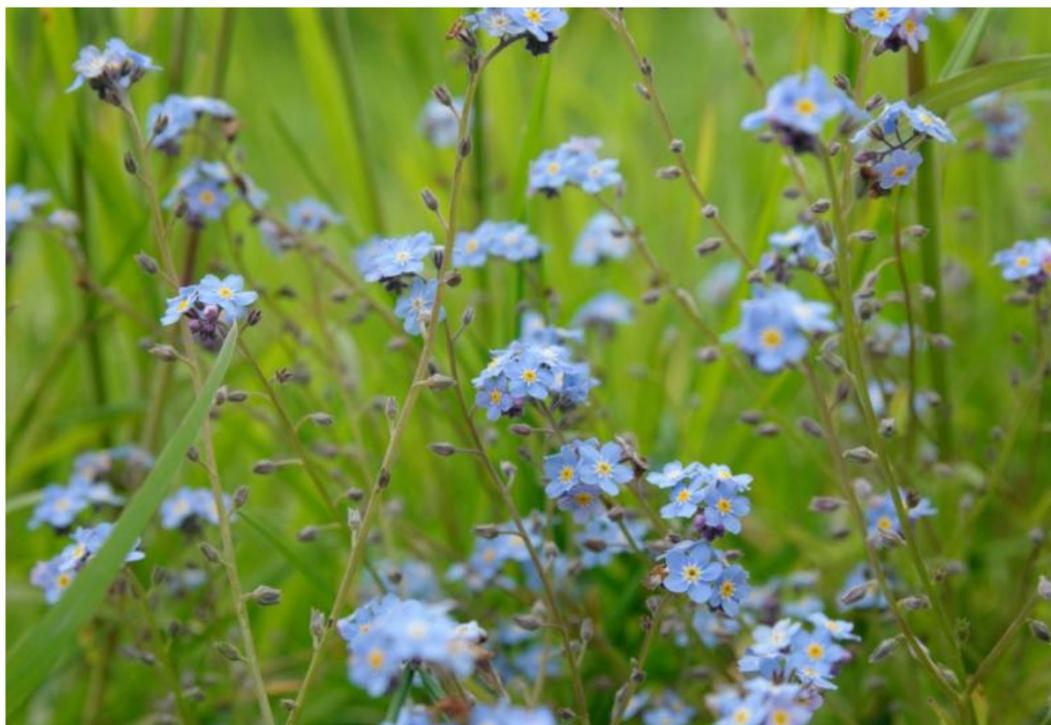
Knowing they are dying helps many people focus on what really matters to them. Often, that means people rather than things. If you are approaching death, you may want to:

- Patch up a relationship;
- Tell a parent, child, partner or friend that you love them;
- Discuss any fears or regrets you may have;

- Talk to someone you trust about your hopes for those you will leave behind;
- Give instructions about who should have any possessions you particularly value;
- Write a will; or
- Ask someone to pray with you.

It is hard to think of the world carrying on after your death. It may help to remember the ways you have changed your own part of the world. The list of possibilities is endless, but yours may include things like bringing up children, providing employment in a business, sharing laughter through humour, giving purpose to others through voluntary work or showing kindness to a neighbour.

You may find it helpful to discuss your own thoughts, questions, hopes and wishes with a friend or family member, or someone from your local church. There is no need to worry about asking questions. Sooner or later, lots of us ask similar questions. That doesn't mean there are easy answers, though. The vicar at your local church or the chaplain at the hospital is used to talking about dying and all the questions it brings up, so get in touch with yours if you have questions or would like to talk.



Related

Big questions?

Facing loss can make us think about our own death, but where can we get help with our questions? This page offers some suggestions.

What is GraveTalk?

There are a growing number of café spaces which bring people together to talk about death and dying – this page tells you more about GraveTalk, launched through the Church of England.

