A Wellbeing Guide’s Experience

I lost my Uncle in 2008, very suddenly and unexpectedly. He was 66.

As I had moved to the UK away from my direct family, he had become a really important part of my life here, visiting us and inviting us to his on a regular basis. He was my closest of 6 family members.

When he died, I felt like I was floating adrift on the ocean, without an anchor. This is despite having lived in Oxford for many years, and being married with two children by then. I cried a lot, for weeks; my parents didn’t seem to really understand why I was so upset, having had a less close relationship with my uncle than I had in the years running up to his death. My husband didn’t really say anything or offer useful support, despite having experienced the loss of his dad in 2002 to cancer.

At work, I’d mostly managed to stay calm, even when I had to speak to a travel agency and provide a death certificate to justify not travelling to a meeting when it clashed with the funeral. Then one day, someone at work asked me how I was, and I burst into tears. I went straight to the hospital’s bereavement services door that I had walked past daily for so many years. A kind lady there spoke to me immediately and suggested I give myself time (I think by then it was about two weeks after he died). She also suggested I contact Cruse Bereavement charity in town: <https://www.oxfordcruse.co.uk/>

I managed to get an appointment with a volunteer counsellor and started attending sessions (I can’t remember the frequency). She helped me identify what support I needed from my husband and my parents, to have my husband attend at one of those sessions so he would hear my needs and feelings, and to go and visit my father and share my grief with him. These things really did help at the height of the upset.

It is quite shocking how upset I am getting, thinking about it and writing this down, but normally I just remember him fondly, remember the places we went, the foods we shared, the games we played, the music we shared, and mostly it is a positive thing to remember him.

Anyway, all this to say that clearly bereavement can be a really long term emotion and one has to accept the waves when they come and try to focus on the positives of today.