

Activity 11: Discuss high-risk lifestyles



Get together with other course members and discuss the role of nature and nurture in influencing lifestyle choices. You may know of people who put their health at risk by excessive drinking, smoking or taking drugs. To what extent do you think these habits might be influenced by genetics? Are some people more at risk from alcohol, tobacco or other drugs? How far are lifestyles copied from friends, with people just going along with what others are doing? To what extent do people choose to use alcohol, tobacco or other drugs in order to reduce stress in their lives?

Functional skills



English: This activity will help you to evidence English speaking and listening skills.

2.7 Major life events

Predictable and unpredictable events

During our life we are influenced by a range of life factors and we are also influenced by the events which happen to us. Some major changes in life can be predicted and even chosen, while others may be unpredictable. If your life suddenly changes there is always the risk that you will feel out of control and stressed. If you have chosen to leave home, marry or retire you may feel in control of these major events. The idea of predictable and unpredictable life events involves generalisation. For some people issues like divorce or redundancy may be predictable, but other people may not have expected to be divorced or lose their job.

Changes in life often involve positive learning as well as a risk of stress. Some major life events are set out in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Predictable life changes

Events that are often predicted	Possible influence on development	
	Positive learning	Risk of stress
Starting school/nursery	Learning to make new friends and cope with change	Feeling unsafe – withdrawing from others. Loss of support from parents

Table 4.8: Unpredictable life changes

Events that are often unpredicted	Possible influence on development	
	Positive learning	Risk of stress
Birth of a sibling	Learning to make new emotional attachments	Jealousy and rivalry – emotional tension because your role within the family has changed. You may lose attention from parents
Redundancy	Learning to adapt to changes in income and lifestyle	Refusal to accept change. Anger or depression. Failure to cope with a loss of income and lifestyle
Illness and serious injury	Learning to adapt to physical change	Grief at the loss of good health. Anger or depression and failure to adapt to disability
Divorce	Learning to cope with a new lifestyle	Resentment or depression. Grief at the loss of the relationship. Failure to adapt to a new lifestyle. Possible financial hardship
Bereavement	Learning to cope with loss and new lifestyle	Grief at the loss of the relationship. Failure to adapt to an unwanted lifestyle

The interrelationship between factors

Major changes in life may interact with all the life factors discussed in this section. For example, retirement, redundancy, divorce, bereavement or serious injury might all result in a loss of income or having to live on a low income. Leaving home, marriage or parenthood might all involve changes

in your home, or in your community and friendship networks. Major life events will change your social, emotional and economic circumstances.

Many life events involve some kind of loss, but this change is rarely simple. For example, bereavement can involve a whole range of other losses and changes.

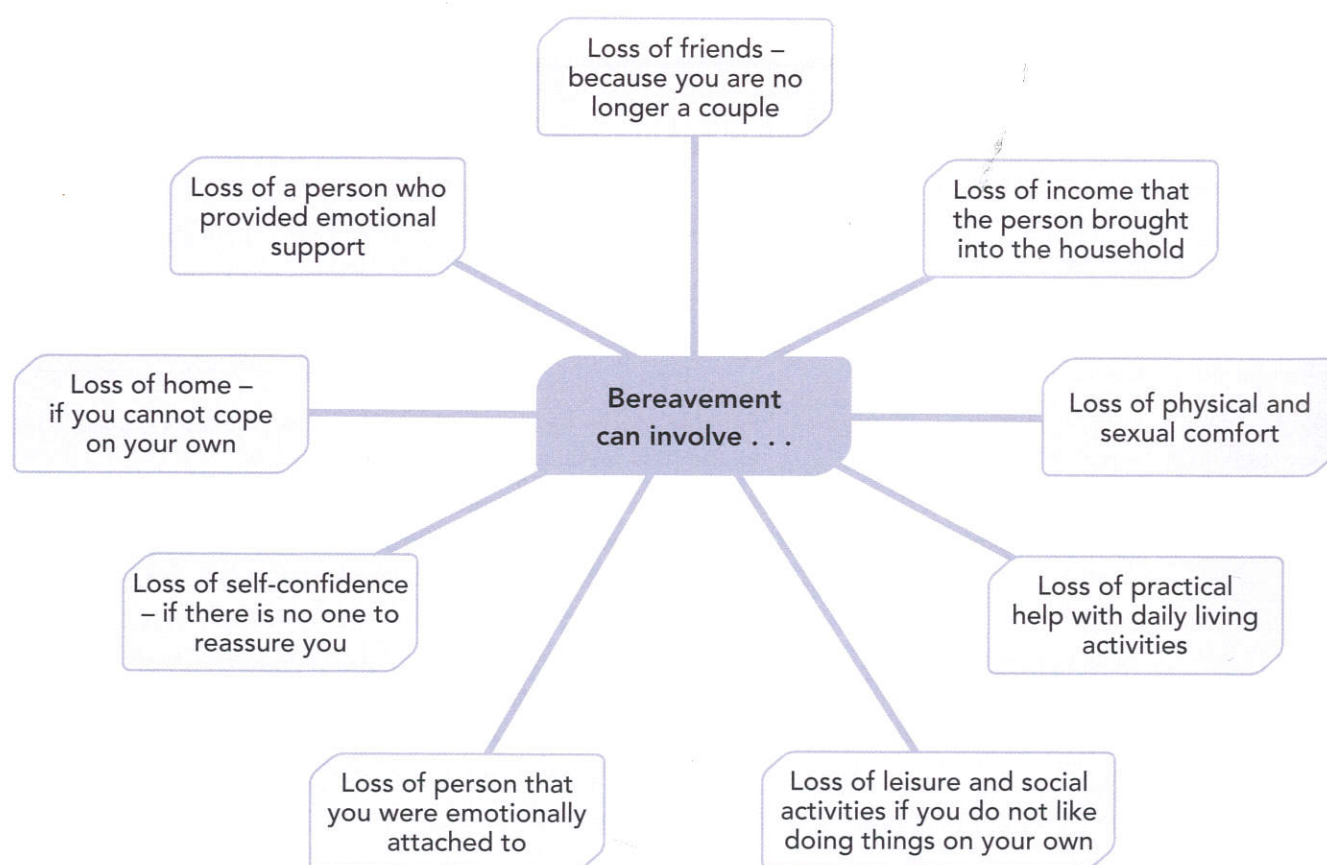


Fig. 4.14: The effects of bereavement