



Kestrel Radio news interview  
January 2008

Recorded at Kestrel Radio  
by Shirah Real, solicitor at Phillips, specialising in Wills & Probate

**Subject: bereavement during the festive season**

***Kestrel: why is it that the loss of a family member or friend seems harder to bear at Christmas and other holiday times?***

Shirah: losing a loved one is always a terrible experience at any time but at Christmas and other holiday times it seems all the more poignant, especially when everyone else is celebrating.

***Kestrel: how are people likely to feel?***

Shirah: all grief is different and there's no right or wrong way to react to the death of a loved one, no 'one size fits all'. The shock may make you feel disbelief that they've gone, or numb, or you may feel so much pain that you can't stop crying. Or maybe you've always been strong and feel uncomfortable showing your grief in front of others. Whatever you feel, your moods may swing all the time, feeling guilt, anger, depression and anxiety, adding to the pain.

***Kestrel: should people try to hold in this awful pain?***

Shirah; no, whatever you're feeling, it's important **not** to hide those feelings because it's much healthier to grieve than to hold it in, and each time you cry it's one more step in the grieving process which can take months for some, years for others – there's no time limit on grief. So be kind to yourself and remember that your loved one would have wanted you to go on living, not hide away from the world.

***Kestrel: is there any help is available?***

Shirah: yes, don't be afraid to let your family and friends know when you're feeling 'up' or 'down' – it'll help you come to terms with your loss. If you feel that you need more help than friends can give, talk to your doctor or a minister, they understand and will be able to refer you to local organisations whose counsellors are experienced in helping the bereaved.

***Kestrel: are there any practical things that people should do?***

Shirah: there are a number of urgent practical matters and formalities, the first one being to obtain the Death Certificate and find the Will – this states what your loved one wants to happen after his/her death and you should find it as soon as possible because it may contain instructions about money, property and possessions as well as funeral wishes.

***Kestrel: what happens if there isn't a Will?***

Shirah: it can be a real mess if there is no Will so you should engage a trusted solicitor straight away. Without a Will, the law imposes rules which define how the estate is distributed which means that the wishes of the deceased may not be fulfilled and the family, friends and

favourite charities may not receive what they need or expect. We see all sorts of problems if there isn't a Will – families fall out over money and those who were promised items may not get them.

***Kestrel: it sounds all very complicated; do you have any advice for our listeners?***

Shirah: yes, **it is** complicated, so make sure you engage a trusted solicitor to help you and for goodness sake make a Will if you don't already have one.

In general if you have a house or other assets, children, or have recently encountered a life changing event such as getting married or divorced or benefiting from an inheritance, then you do really need to make a Will or update an existing one.

***Kestrel: what if you are not married but simply cohabiting?***

Shirah: it's still vital to have a Will, especially if you have children. A partner in a cohabiting relationship does not have the same automatic rights as a married couple and should one partner die, there is little or no protection.

Finally, if you have been bereaved recently, you don't have to go it alone – accept help from family and friends and remember your solicitor can take away the legal burden, leaving you time to grieve and to be with your family.