

Share your problems with



Ironside

**mother enjoys chatting to
him from time to time.**

Can't grieve

My mother has died of a heart attack at the age of 71. I was very calm throughout it all, attended the cremation, sorted through her things and everyone said I coped marvellously. But now, a few weeks later, I feel awful. I simply can't cry. My eyes burn, my throat hurts, but the tears won't come. Normally I am a very weepy person and bawl at newspaper articles and "Bambi"—but I can't cry for my own mother.

As much nonsense is written about bereavement and death as is about birth. A mother is supposed to enter a magical world of love the moment her baby is born; a person is supposed to weep for ages if their mother dies. Life isn't that simple. There could be all kinds of reasons why you can't cry for your mother. You might secretly and understandably feel

*lonality and very
as far as
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and then I mother
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ed wish I
? it go away. My
hand.*

**et, the more capable
ese facets of your
of the same coin.
a soul. Two—you're
e going nuts. Can't
ied up with each
ider that do-it-yourself
r men-friends because
you might feel. Try
ependent on anyone
le, and see.**

*enormously relieved (and
guilty about feeling relieved)*

that this burden is off your shoulders. Or you might feel a childish fury that your mother has left you—a fury that is irrational, but understandable. You might be in a state of complete shock, simply stunned. Or you might be right—you may want to cry. Perhaps you could talk to your doctor about your feelings if they persist? But don't feel you've got to turn into a weeping heap because that's the so-called "norm". You're quite entitled to feel exactly what you like, when you like, you know!

Wrong sex

My neighbour is bringing her nine-year-old boy up as a girl. He has long curling hair, and wears a "smock" top and little girls shoes to go to school. I did once mention this to my neighbour when the boy blurted out that, when they are inside the house, he is dressed in a girl's frock. Since I talked to her she refuses to speak to me. She has no husband and I am desperately worried about her mental condition. She seems a good mother in other ways, but surely there's something wrong with her?

I am worried about what is happening to her son. Please, please, get in touch with the NSPCC, 1 Riding House Street, London W1P 8AA. Tel: 01-580 8812. They will never mention your name—and you don't even have to give it, anyway, if you don't want to. I am sure this problem can be sorted out quite simply without the child being taken away from his mother. But something must be done, for this is a form of mental rather than physical cruelty. This doesn't mean that the NSPCC won't be just as eager to help.

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