



GOOD GRIEF HASTINGS

A FESTIVAL OF
LOVE + LOSS

22-25 May 2026

Booking & full event details here:

www.18hours.org.uk/good-grief-festival/

  /18hourevents



Good Grief:

Artists explore the impact of grief



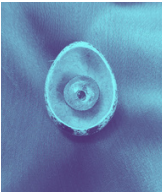
Emma Harding - Ceramics

Emma Harding is an artist and maker working in ceramics and mixed media mosaics. Her work explores natural materials through saggar-firing, creating heads and figures as vessels, ocarinas and funerary urns. Emma is interested in how the forms inside our bodies are reflected in the natural world, incorporating mosaic fragments that echo memory and the experiences we carry with us.



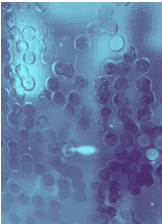
Alexandra Vacaroiu - Multimedia

Alexandra Vacaroiu is a multidisciplinary artist working with photography, text, cyanotypes and moving image. Her practice explores memory, loss and the instability of personal histories. Using processes such as burial, reworking and printing on domestic fabrics, she creates images that shift between presence and absence. Rooted in intimate family narratives, her work reflects on grief, care, and the fragile act of remembering.



Justina Kochansky - Sculpture

Justina Kochansky is a miniature artist who works with eggshells. Her sculptures often reflect contrasts; including fragile strength, contained ferocity, and creative decay, among others. The works shared as part of Good Grief Hastings are responses to the deaths of her mother and grandmother.



Colin Booth - Painting

Colin Booth has exhibited widely in the UK and Europe and runs Electro Studios and Project Space. His painting In Praise of Darkness, was created after the death of his mother when 'darkness descended upon the studio, though inevitably things carried on much the same.' Its high gloss surface draws in the viewer, merging reflection and image like looking into a mirror.



Erica Smith - Textiles

Erica is a graphic designer who also uses textiles and makes jewellery. In December 2024 she saw David Cain's poem on Instagram and asked if she could turn it into a quilt. People donated their old and loved clothes, teatowels and bed linen for the patchwork. This was integral to the project.

Opening Celebration - everyone welcome

📅 Fri 22 May 2026

🕒 5:30pm-8pm

📍 Electro Studios Project Space, Seaside Rd,
St Leonards-on-Sea, TN38 0AL

🎟 Free

Weekend Exhibition

📅 Sat 23-Mon 25 May 2026

🕒 12pm-5pm

📍 Electro Studios Project Space

🎟 Free

Welcome to Good Grief Hastings

Grief touches every life, yet many people experience it in isolation. Good Grief Hastings brings people together through creativity, conversation and community, creating welcoming spaces to reflect, connect and talk openly about love and loss.

Over the late May Bank Holiday weekend, artists, storytellers, researchers and community organisations come together for a 4-day festival where you'll find storytelling, theatre, film screenings, live music and community singing. All events are free to attend, with some requiring booking due to limited capacity.

There are conversations with speakers including Prof. Mary-Frances O'Connor and former Children's Laureate Joseph Coelho, alongside gatherings such as the Good Grief Marketplace, where performances, creative activities and support organisations sit alongside one another for those new or experienced with love and loss.

While the festival is designed to be welcoming and supportive, we recognise that exploring grief can come with a range of emotions. If needed, support and further information will be provided by St Michael's Hospice.

Good Grief Hastings is produced by local events organisation 18 Hours, in partnership with St Michael's Hospice, Good Grief Festival CIC and the Universities of Brighton and Bristol. It is supported by Arts Council England, alongside funding from the Coastal Community and Creative Health project and Hastings Borough Council. In the lead up to the festival, Good Grief Hastings has been out in the community, working with local groups and organisations across the town. Creative facilitators have led a wide range of workshops.



Accessibility

These icons indicate that the event and/or venue is accessible for wheelchair users, and equipped with an Audio Induction Loop System.



Donations

A suggested £5 donation throughout the festival, unless otherwise stated, helps us keep future Good Grief festivals thriving. Look out for this icon beside selected events.

A SumUp card machine will be available for easy donations.



Please book here:

www.18hours.org.uk/good-grief-festival/





Walk of Remembrance



🕒 10:30am (gather at 10:15am)

📍 Information Kiosk, Alexandra Park, TN34 2LG

👉 Free

Beginning at the Information Kiosk by the old bowling green and finishing at Eat @ The Park Café, this gentle walk follows accessible paths through scenic gardens and woodland. This will be a space for reflection and connection, with the walk offering participants the opportunity to dedicate remembrance ribbons, which will later be displayed on the St Michael's Hospice Remembrance Ribbon Tree.

Duration: Approx. 1hr on level ground.

We need to talk about death

Biggerhouse Film



🕒 3:30pm-4:30pm

📍 Arthur Easton Centre, St Michael's Hospice,
25 Upper Maze Hill, St Leonards-on-Sea,
TN38 0LB

👉 Free, booking recommended

A short film screening followed by a conversation about death, grief and how we talk about loss. This 15-minute film is a collaboration between Biggerhouse Film and adults with learning differences which gently opens up conversations about death and dying. The screening will be followed by a discussion with the filmmaker, Stephen Clarke.



Singing in Love & Loss

The Community Choir



🕒 5:30pm-6:30pm

📍 Christ Church, Silchester Rd, St Leonards-on-Sea TN37 6GL

👉 Free

Join The Community Choir with St. Michael's Hospice, led by The Music Well, for an uplifting sing-a-long of popular contemporary songs that rank highly in the UK funeral playlists. Whether you've experienced grief or not, singing with others promotes connection, community and healing. Let's lift the roof in remembrance!



The Grieving Body

Prof. Mary-Frances O'Connor



🕒 7pm-8pm

📍 Arthur Easton Centre, St Michael's Hospice, 25 Upper Maze Hill, St Leonards-on-Sea, TN38 0LB

📄 Free, booking recommended

When we love someone, they become encoded in our bodies and brains. And so, when they die, we feel this loss in every part of our being. In this session, renowned grief expert and neuroscientist Professor Mary-Frances O'Connor will explore what happens in our brain and body when we grieve, and share some of the ways that we can begin to adjust to our new reality. In conversation with Good Grief Festival Co-Director Dr Lesel Dawson, Mary-Frances will also offer practical tips to help us cope when life is tough and how grief can be a form of learning that offers opportunities for growth and change. Audience members will be able to ask questions.

BSL available upon booking.

Saturday

Stiltwalkers



Xena Flame & Dolly Delicious

🕒 10am & 11am

📍 Priory Meadow Shopping Centre,
TN34 1PH

🎟️ Free

Meet popular local stilt-walkers as they roam the town in their moth-themed costumes.



🕒 11am - 3pm

📍 The Stade Open Space, TN34 3DW

🎟️ Free, no booking required

A welcoming community space for all ages, bringing together performances, creative activities, conversation and local organisations to open up discussion about grief, love and loss. Drop in throughout the afternoon for storytelling, singing, movement and making, alongside walkabout performances and puppetry. You might find yourself weaving, sharing stories or simply pausing for conversation.

Good Grief

Plan your visit: Stade Hall

11am & 12:30pm **The Thing About Goats - Baby Panda**

A playful puppet show for younger audiences exploring loss and new beginnings, followed by a hands-on bell ringing workshop.



11:40am **Ashes to Admin - Christina Martin**

A talk by writer Christina Martin, whose book *Ashes to Admin* draws on her work arranging council funerals for people with no family or funds. Through stories from the front line, she explores the practical and human realities of death and remembrance.



1:10pm **Singing for Wellbeing workshop - Soundcastle**

Soundcastle are bringing a dynamic Singing for Wellbeing workshop to Good Grief Hastings. Join them to explore how you can use your voice to support yourself and those around you. No singing experience required! All welcome.



2pm **Tai Chi - Lou Requena**

A gentle Tai Chi session using slow flowing movement and breath to support grounding, release and quiet resilience for those navigating grief and loss.



The Marketplace also brings together organisations, practitioners and makers offering information, support and conversation around grief, loss and wellbeing. You will also find local doulas, celebrants and funeral directors sharing insight into the support they offer, alongside handmade ceramics, candles and other crafted objects created locally.

Death Café

🕒 10am - 11:30am

📍 Isabel Blackman Centre, Winding St,
Hastings, TN34 3AT

👉 Free, booking recommended as limited capacity



A welcoming space to talk openly about death, dying and life. Tea, coffee and cake available to purchase.

Death Café is an informal gathering open to anyone who wants to share thoughts, questions and experiences around death in a relaxed, friendly setting.

Marketplace

FREE



Stade Open Space

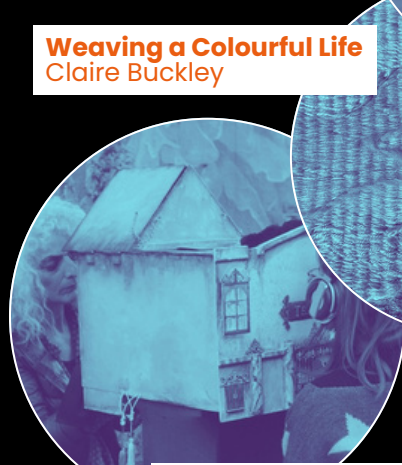
Story Collector
Becky Fifield



The Griefcase
Ben Watson



Silent Disco
Freedom Dance



Weaving a Colourful Life
Claire Buckley



Hodman & Sally
The Flying Buttresses

Gato Negro (Black Cat)
Gabriela Cespedes



Departure Lounge

Elle Productions



🕒 2:30pm & 4:30pm

📍 The Frimley Centre, Hastings & Bexhill Mencap,
64 London Rd, St Leonards-on-Sea TN37 6AS

💎 Free, booking recommended

Run Time: Approx. ~45m

Age Rating: 12+

Written and performed by Lucy Pappas and Lisa Harmer, Departure Lounge follows two sisters who navigate grief, memory and family tensions, blending humour, honesty, song and movement to explore relationships and celebrate life alongside loss. The performances are followed by a Q&A.



© Bev Lee Harling by Alice Denny

Hey Good Lookin'

Bev Lee Harling



🕒 7:30pm

📍 St John's Church Hall, Brittany Rd,
St Leonards-on-Sea TN38 0RD

🎟️ Free, suggested donation: £10. Booking recommended

Run Time: Approx. ~70m

Singer, songwriter and storyteller Bev Lee Harling presents an evening of story and song exploring memories of life with her father and the bittersweet realities of dementia and his end of life. Blending original music with country classics, this intimate performance reflects on family, memory and the enduring power of music.



Running through Grief with Sue Mann (Hastings Runners)

- 🕒 10:30am (gather at 10:15am)
- 📍 Hastings Seafront (meet in front of Hastings Pier)
- 🎟️ Free

Join Sue Mann and others for a friendly 5k run along the seafront, followed by an optional reflective talk on running through grief (see event below).

Still Running After All These Tears A Talk with Lisa Jackson



- 🕒 11:30am
- 📍 White Rock Hotel, 1-10 White Rock, Hastings TN34 1JU
- 🎟️ Free, booking recommended

Writer and runner Lisa Jackson shares her personal story of grief after her husband of 30 years died, followed in quick succession by her sister and father. In this honest and hopeful talk she reflects on how running helped her navigate loss and find a way forward, and how it became part of rebuilding a joyful and purposeful life. Followed by book signing with books available to purchase.



Community showcase and open mic



- 🕒 1pm-3pm
- 📍 Durbar Hall, Hastings Museum & Art Gallery, John's Place, Bohemia Rd, Hastings TN34 1ET
- 🎟️ Free, booking recommended

An afternoon of spoken word compéred by local favourite Ben Watson. Open to the public to come together and share their creative exploration of love and loss.

Storyteller Raven Hurste will begin the afternoon with their story The Keepers of Hearts, a faerie story in rhyme which is set in Hastings Old Town in 1850. Community members, including Warming Up The Homeless, who have been part of creative outreach workshops will also bring songs, poems and performances to share.

If All the World Were...

Joseph Coelho



🕒 3:30pm-4:30pm

📍 Durbar Hall, Hastings Museum & Art Gallery, John's Place, Bohemia Rd, Hastings TN34 1ET

🎟️ Free, booking recommended

Using his book 'If All the World Were...', former Children's Laureate Joseph Coelho will do a gentle reading for families accompanied by sound. This will be followed by the opportunity to make a small memory book together to take away.



Afternoon



Secrets of the Sheela Na Gig: Storytelling and Clay-making Workshop



🕒 6pm-8pm

📍 Durbar Hall, Hastings Museum & Art Gallery, John's Place, Bohemia Rd, Hastings TN34 1ET

🎟️ Free, suggested donation: £10.
Booking recommended

Storyteller Xanthe Gresham leads a participatory evening of storytelling, song, film and clay making inspired by the ancient Sheela Na Gig symbol. Framed around women's experiences, the session explores grief, renewal and the body's natural understanding of loss through myth, creativity and shared reflection.

"When my mother died, I immersed myself in two things: the Greek myth of Ceres and Kore and old cine films."



Blue Spaces

Dr. Catherine Kelly

🕒 11:30am

📍 White Rock Hotel, 1-10 White Rock, Hastings, TN34 1JU

👉 Free, booking recommended

Like so many, Dr. Catherine Kelly experienced the healing potential of blue spaces when she turned to the sea to navigate grief following her mother's sudden death. Join us to share how and why water can help us to cope with bereavement and loss.

Afternoon Film Screenings

An afternoon of **free** short films exploring grief, love and loss, created by regional filmmakers. A curated selection will play on a continuous loop, so you're welcome to drop in at any point. All films will include subtitles. Seating is limited for each viewing, so please keep this in mind when planning your visit.

🕒 2pm

📍 Fisherman's Museum, Rock-a-Nore Rd, Hastings TN34 3DW

👉 Free

Soul Films Talk & Film Screening:

Sybil AhMane & Wendy Pye introduce Soul Films – sensitively produced short films that remember and celebrate someone who has died or is nearing end of life

🕒 2-5pm

📍 Fisherman's Museum, Rock-a-Nore Rd, Hastings TN34 3DW and Warrior Square Gardens, St Leonards-on-Sea, TN37 6BS

👉 Free

'Dear Future' Films, Rebecca Marshall

- **'Of Dying'** A film-poem
- **'Bee Fever'** 15min documentary of Angie Biltcliffe using her love of beekeeping as a metaphor to understand death and the cycle of life
- **'Belonging'** Four film-poems filmed throughout 2024 about the cycle of life and finding a sense of belonging in the seasons
- **'The Forest in Me'** is a letter to her child in the future when she might not be by his side

🕒 2pm-5pm

📍 Warrior Square Gardens, St Leonards-on-Sea, TN37 6BS

👉 Free

Young People's films

Young filmmakers responding to the festival themes of grief, love and loss, in partnership with Talent Accelerator, De La Warr Pavilion





Bright Hollow

Rebecca E Marshall



- 🕒 Gather at 7pm
- 📍 The Stade Open Space,
Hastings, TN34 3DW
- 👉 Free

'Bright Hollow' is a tender, luminous meditation on grief as a journey - an ode to resilience, collective spirit, and the healing found in coming together.

Join us for a unique outdoor arts experience by the sea, bringing together film poetry, spoken word, live music and a fire-sculpture in a shared, gentle journey, featuring artists such as Rebecca E Marshall (Dear Future Films), Clare Whistler (Collaborative artist/performer), Leigh Dyer (metal sculptor), and Joanna Lawrence (composer).

This special promenade event invites audiences of all ages to become part of a 'pebble orchestra' as we take a slow walk along Winch Road, passing lines of poetry, and will conclude with live music and a fire sculpture by the shore.

Please note:

There will be a short procession to Rock-A-Nore.

If you have limited mobility please join us at the far end of Rock-A-Nore car park

Other events that might interest you



Poems of Love and Loss:

My Grief Journey

Alan Durant

📅 Sun 24 May 2026

🕒 7pm

📍 Mike's, 74 Norman Rd
St Leonards-on-Sea, TN38 0EJ

👉 www.mikeslist.uk/#events

Author and poet Alan Durant performs poetry he wrote in response to his wife's death, enabling him to connect, engage, share and articulate the reality of grief in all its love, desolation, pain, confusion, heartbreak and hope.

All profits from ticket sales will be donated to Dragonflies Bereavement Project for supporting children 5-18 years and their families.

Beltane Threshold:

A Death Meditation

Katie Rose Whiting

📅 Mon 25 May 2026

🕒 3pm-4:30pm

📍 Hastings Museum & Art Gallery, John's Place, Bohemia Rd, Hastings, TN34 1ET

👉 www.katierosedoula.com/store/

This guided Death Meditation invites us to explore the relationship between endings and aliveness, and how what has been released or grieved becomes the ground from which new vitality rises. Through guided meditation, breath, rest and ritual, this space honours both grief and the life that returns.

Katie Rose Whiting is a fully accredited Miscarriage and End of Life Doula with years of experience supporting individuals and families through loss, grief and profound transition.

Art in times of challenge:

voices from the Hastings community

📅 21-31 May 2026

🕒 Tues-Sat 10am-5pm, Sun 11am-4:30pm

📍 Hastings Museum & Art Gallery, John's Place, Bohemia Rd, Hastings TN34 1ET

Hastings Museum & Art Gallery is hosting an exhibition that brings together original artworks by Hastings residents who used creative methods to explore how creativity, care and place shape their lived experiences of health and wellbeing during some of life's most challenging moments. The pieces highlight resilience, connection and the power of creativity in community life. Curated with the Coastal Community and Creative Health project.

Programme Overview

For more information, please see inside booklet

Friday 22 May

10:30am	Walk of Remembrance	Alexandra Park
2:30–3:30pm	Film: We need to talk about death	St Michael's Hospice
6:30pm	Prof. Mary-Frances O'Connor	St Michael's Hospice
5:30–6:30pm	Singing in Love & Loss	Christ Church, St Leonard's-on-Sea

Saturday 23 May

10am & 11am	Stiltwalkers	Priory Meadow Shopping Centre
10am–11:30am	Community Death Café	Isabel Blackman Centre
11am–3pm	Good Grief Marketplace performances, creative activities, movement and information, and support from local service providers	The Stade Open Space and Stade Hall
2:30 & 4:30pm	Departure Lounge	The Frimley Centre
7:30pm	Hey Good Lookin'	St John's Church Hall

Sunday 24 May

10:30am	Running through Grief	Hastings seafront
11:30am	Still Running After All These Tears	White Rock Hotel
1–3pm	Community showcase	Hastings Museum & Art Gallery
3:30–4:30pm	Joseph Coelho	Hastings Museum & Art Gallery
6–8pm	Xanthe Gresham-Knight	Hastings Museum & Art Gallery

Monday 25 May

11:30am	Dr Catherine Kelly	White Rock Hotel
2pm	Talk: Soul Films	Fisherman's Museum
2pm–5pm	Film screenings	Fisherman's Museum
2pm–5pm	Film screenings	Warrior Square Gardens
7pm	Finale: Bright Hollow	The Stade Open Space

Programme subject to change

Good Grief Hastings is being evaluated by the Coastal Community and Creative Health (CC&CH) research team at the University of Brighton. You may be invited to complete a short survey or feedback card or speak briefly with a team member to help us understand the festival's reach and impact.

To find out more, please contact creativehealthse@brighton.ac.uk



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



Where Good Grief began

Good Grief Festival was founded in 2020 by Professor Lucy Selman at the University of Bristol. Originally created as an online event during the pandemic, it aimed to bring grief and bereavement into the open, encourage conversations and support people grieving in isolation. It is co-directed by Dr Lesel Dawson and produced by Dr Rachel Hare.

Since then, it has grown into a nationally recognised festival, bringing researchers, healthcare professionals and counsellors, artists and communities together to talk openly and creatively about grief. Recent in person editions, including Good Grief Weston in Weston-super-Mare, have transformed community spaces into places for reflection, conversation and support, attracting thousands of participants across the UK.

Now, this nationally recognised festival comes to Hastings, shaped by local partners and rooted in the town's strong cultural and community networks.