



HOMICIDE AND GRIEVING: A SURVIVOR'S GUIDE



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WHAT IS A HOMICIDE SURVIVOR?

Those who have lost a loved one to murder or homicide are referred to as homicide survivors. Survivors are family members and friends who have close emotional, personal, and/or intimate ties with the homicide victim. Homicide survivors are also victims of crime because they have been indirectly harmed by the commission of a murder. This harm takes the form of the loss they experience because of the murder, and the difficulties resulting from that loss.

Although dealing with a death is always difficult, when the death is the result of a deliberate and often violent act committed by another human being, the pain of loss is intensified, making a survivor's grief more complicated. Thus, homicide survivors are known to experience unique emotions and need different types of support when coping with the death of their loved one. If someone close to you has been murdered, you are a homicide survivor and this guide can help you to understand your unique grief.

HOW IS MY GRIEF DIFFERENT?

UNEXPECTEDNESS

The unexpectedness of murder is one of the reasons that your grief is different. You do not have time to prepare for the death or to anticipate the grief you will experience. One morning you may go through the normal breakfast routine with your child or spouse for example, without ever knowing that they will not return home at the end of the day. There is no prognosis for homicide like there is for terminal illness, or general timeline like there is for natural death.

VIOLENCE

Dealing with the violent nature of your loved one's death, which was intentionally caused by another person, is a difficult task and intensifies the emotions that you may feel while grieving. Survivors are sometimes needed to identify their loved ones either through photos or by physically looking at their body, or may even be required to view crime scene photos. If this is the case, you may actually need to view the violence that was inflicted on your family member or friend. Furthermore, you may sometimes find yourself reflecting or imagining the pain that your loved one must have gone through prior to their death. All of these things cause additional emotional trauma, and extend and intensify the grieving process beyond that which others dealing with the death of a loved one would feel.

CRIMINAL NATURE

Another person must have committed a crime in order for a person's death to be deemed a homicide, and therefore many other people outside of the victim's family will be thrust into your life. You will likely have to talk with police and attorneys about the circumstances of your loved one's death, you may be repeatedly approached by the media, and the trial and parole processes can extend the grieving process by years and sometimes for a life time (please see the section titled "Homicide Survivors and the Criminal Justice System" for more information). Survivors often find that they have little control over, or input into, the criminal justice process as well as what is said in the media. This is a reality that can cause you additional frustration, anxiety, and re-victimization.

INSENSITIVITY

Homicide is a rare occurrence, and because it is such a rare occurrence, few people know how to talk to or help homicide survivors. This includes people in the criminal justice system, friends, family, and unfortunately even some mental health professionals. Repeated questioning by the media, being told that you need to "move on" or "get over it", or having a police officer or service worker say that your loved one's death "could have been worse" or "is no different than if they died in a car accident," are all examples of the type of insensitivity that you may encounter as a homicide survivor.

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS I MIGHT EXPERIENCE WHILE GRIEVING?

It is important to understand that not all survivors will experience the same symptoms of grief, nor will they all experience them in the same order, or with the same intensity. These emotions and grief related symptoms may actually co-exist for survivors of homicide, and do not necessarily happen in stages.

Following the notification of death, many survivors report feeling like “this can’t be happening.” Common emotions you may experience are shock, disbelief, and denial. Experiencing these emotions, particularly denial, is a way of lessening the pain of what has just become your new reality, and has been described as the body’s way of coping and only letting in as much reality as you can handle at a given time. As these initial emotions fade, you may begin to ask questions about the circumstances of your loved one’s death.

In the days and weeks following the notification of death, you must often deal with your loved one’s funeral/memorial, other family obligations, the media, the police, the legal system, and a host of additional sources of stress and anxiety. Throughout this time, feelings of despair, numbness, helplessness, sadness, aloneness and emptiness are often felt. It is also common to feel like life has lost much of its meaning, and that you are simply going through the motions.

As the investigation and judicial process continues, these types of emotions begin to recede and you may begin to feel angry. This anger can be directed at friends, family, doctors, yourself, the loved one who died, and even at religious deities. Others may feel that your anger is misplaced, inappropriate or disproportionate, but this is not true. It is the job of your friends and family members to try and understand your anger, and it is your job to let that anger out. Anger is a necessary stage of healing.

Anger usually coincides with bargaining, where you may explore all of the “what if” and “if only” possibilities around the murder of your loved one. You may try to come to a temporary truce by thinking things such as “What if I devote the rest of my life to helping others, then can I wake up from this dream?” Unfortunately, guilt is often associated with bargaining, as the “if only” questions tend to cause you to find fault within yourself, or to feel that if you had only done something differently, your loved one would still be alive.

These feelings of guilt often lead to depression. Some level of depression is normal in order to cope with what has happened to your loved one. Friends and family members often see depression as unnatural, something that needs to be fixed, but in reality the situation of losing a loved one in a violent way is depressing, and not feeling depression would be unnatural. It is important for family and friends to be there for you, but not to prevent these feelings.

Due to the traumatic nature of murder, survivor’s are also at a higher risk of developing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD. If you experience: (1) recurrent and intrusive re-living of the traumatic event, such as dreams or “flashbacks”, (2) avoidance of places or events which serve as reminders of the murder, and (3) ongoing feelings of increased arousal such as constant vigilance or an exaggerated startled reaction for a period of one month or more, and these disturbances are affecting important areas of your life such as family and work relationships, you may be suffering from PTSD. If so, it would be beneficial for you to seek help from a mental health professional to help you cope with this disorder.

As time moves on, you may find that you occasionally experience intense feelings of loss, triggered by anything related to your murdered loved one, such as a particular smell, taste, person or place. These intense feelings which often lead to powerful bouts of crying are called grief spasms. They may manifest at any point after the murder, but generally decrease in intensity and frequency as times passes.

Eventually, you are often able to accept that your loss has occurred and cannot be undone. Feelings of acceptance may never be fully achieved however, or may only be achieved in part. This is because while you may be able to accept that your loved one is dead, you may never be able to accept how they died, or the explanation given (if any) for why they were murdered.

Survivors never really “get over” the fact that their loved one has been murdered, but rather evolve to where the bad days slowly lessen and the raw distress and anger felt begins to subside. The survivor creates a new type of normal where they can begin to reinvest in the world again. It is important to understand that experiencing setbacks in your grief is commonplace, as your new normal often includes attending court, giving victim impact statements, attending parole hearings and other justice system related processes, in addition to experiencing holidays, birthdays, and anniversaries without your loved one.

OTHER GRIEF SYMPTOMS YOU MAY EXPERIENCE

◆ **PHYSICAL**

Fatigue, insomnia, nightmares, hyper-arousal / hyper-vigilance (jumpiness), lethargy, muscle tension, chills, increased heart rate or blood pressure, nausea, cramps, fainting, dizziness, respiratory problems, impaired immune response, headaches, change in appetite, decreased libido.

◆ **THINKING**

Impaired concentration, impaired decision-making ability, difficulty setting priorities, memory impairment, confusion, distortion, decreased self-esteem, decreased self-efficacy, self-blame, reduced ability to express emotion, intrusive thoughts and memories / constant thoughts about the circumstances of the death

◆ **INTERPERSONAL**

Alienation/isolation, social withdrawal, increased conflict in relationships, vocational impairment, school impairment, desire for revenge, decreased feelings of safety and security.

◆ **SPIRITUAL**

Faith in humanity may be shaken, feeling distant from religion, turning to religion, questioning one's basic beliefs.

HOW WILL THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM AFFECT MY GRIEF?

Having to deal with the intricacies of the criminal justice system is a process that you will have to take part in that other families of deceased loved ones will not. Some particular aspects of the Criminal Justice System that can impact how you are able to grieve are discussed below.

**FOR COURT UPDATES AND INFORMATION ON THE CRIMINAL
JUSTICE SYSTEM CONTACT THE CALGARY POLICE SERVICE
VICTIM ASSISTANCE SUPPORT TEAM
AT 403-428-8398**

THE POLICE

The biggest impact that the police will have on you will likely occur when they present the notification of death. Treating you with compassion and respect will have a positive impact on you at one of the most overwhelming and devastating times of your life. Ideally, the death notification should:

- ◆ Always be done in person, never over the phone, and in a private place
- ◆ Provide as much information as possible about the crime
- ◆ Be direct and honest
- ◆ Not leave the survivor alone
- ◆ Provide information and referrals to victim services
- ◆ Never blame the deceased person for their death
- ◆ Allow survivors time to get over the initial shock of the news before asking any questions

The police will also be responsible for arresting the person who murdered your loved one once the investigation is complete. Survivors should understand that the police often cannot disclose certain information while the case is still ongoing, as this may jeopardize the future of the investigation.

THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROCESS

◆ **PRELIMINARY HEARINGS:**

The purpose of a preliminary hearing is to see if the Crown Prosecutor, sometimes called the Crown Attorney or simply "The Crown", has enough evidence to justify sending the case to trial (if the judge determines that they do not, the charges against the accused person will be dropped). It also gives the accused and their defence lawyer a chance to hear the details of the case against the accused. At this time, decisions on whether to exclude or include certain evidence are also made, influencing how much and what types of evidence the jury will hear during the actual trial.

This is meant to ensure that only the evidence that was collected legally is used. The decisions made in a preliminary hearing may cause you to feel like the trial will not be fair or just. If you did not attend the preliminary hearing, finding out only after the trial that certain evidence was excluded may compound these feelings.

◆ TRIAL

The trial process will determine whether or not the person that the police have arrested can be found legally accountable for murder. Throughout the trial process, the Crown Prosecutor or a victim support worker from The Victim Assistance Support Team (VAST) can keep you informed about important trial dates, the status of the trial, and be able to provide you with answers to any questions you may have.

◆ PLEA BARGAINING:

Sometimes, the Crown feels that the probability of convicting the accused of first or second degree murder may be too low, and does not want to risk losing at trial and having the offender freed indefinitely. In these cases, the Crown will likely make a 'bargain' with the accused to plead guilty to a lesser charge, which carries a less serious sentence, in order to ensure a conviction. Although plea bargains may be upsetting for you because you may feel that justice was not served properly, you have the right to meet with the Crown in advance and let them explain their reasoning.

◆ EVIDENCE:

The possible presentation of disturbing testimony, crime scene photos, or weapons during the trial can negatively impact your ability to grieve or cope with the loss of your loved one. Survivors should speak with the Crown about when this sort of evidence might be presented, so that you will have a chance to prepare yourself or to choose not to attend court on that day.

◆ THE VERDICT:

Homicide survivors often feel that once a verdict has been reached, particularly if it is a guilty one, that they will experience a sense of closure and finality. However, often times, this is not the case, as the criminal justice process continues into the area of corrections and parole and can stretch out for years. Likewise, a finding of not guilty may trigger feelings of injustice, frustration, and anger because you are no closer to knowing who killed your loved one, or the person who did commit the murder has not been punished.

◆ VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENTS:

You have a right to submit a victim impact statement on the physical, emotional or financial impact this crime has had on you. This is your opportunity to participate in the sentencing stage of a trial. Victim impact statements can have both positive and negative effects on your grief; positive impacts come from

being able to tell the offender and the judge exactly how the murder has affected your life. You are encouraged to read your victim impact statement out loud to the court. If you do not feel comfortable doing this, you can designate someone to read it for you. You also have the right to hold a photograph of your loved one during the presentation of your victim impact statement. Negative impacts can stem from the fact that victim impact statements are often restrictive and you may not be able to say everything that you would like to say. For more information on victim impact statements, please go to: [Alberta Justice and Solicitor General/Programs and Services/Help for victims of crime](#).

◆ SENTENCING:

The Crown can help you to understand why they are asking for a certain sentence, or why a judge gave the offender one sentence versus another. For survivors of homicide, any sentence that is given to an offender may not seem like enough, even if it is the maximum sentence available; no amount of time served in prison can bring your loved one back.

◆ OBTAINING PERSONAL ITEMS USED AS EVIDENCE:

To get back personal items used as evidence, you must wait until the trial is over, at which point the judge will state whether the items can be returned. Before actually obtaining these items however, you may have to wait until the time period for either the defence or the prosecution to begin an appeal is over. This is usually 30 days after sentencing. Once it is over, you should speak with the police officer who investigated the case about getting the belongings back. You may have to travel to an evidence storage facility in the area where the trial was held to obtain the items.

CORRECTIONS AND PAROLE (POST-SENTENCING)

For homicide survivors, the criminal justice system often prolongs their grief, and unintentionally re-victimizes them after the offender has been convicted. Depending on the sentence they received, the offender will be eligible for early release (parole) at a time in the future determined by the judge, and will have the opportunity to re-apply every two years after this, if their first application is denied.

Survivors have the right to register to receive notifications about the offender (such as when he/she is up for parole or transfers to a different facility or prison security level). For more information and to register please go to: Parole Board of Canada at: www.pbc-clcc.gc.ca/forms/pdf/pbc0031e.pdf. If you choose to do this, the semi-regular updates about the offender you will receive may also trigger painful memories and cause further or renewed grief.

As a survivor, you have the right to attend the parole board hearing for every application made by an offender to be released on parole. You have the right to provide input about why the offender should or should not be released. If you are unable to attend in person, you have the right to listen to an audio recording of the hearing. While most survivors appreciate the opportunity to participate and voice their concerns at these hearings, dealing with the correction and parole authorities can cause additional emotional burdens.

As an offender can choose to re-apply for early release every 2 years, you are repeatedly required to talk about the experience of losing your loved one and to travel to the place of the hearing. You must do this while at the same time thinking about the possibility that the person who murdered your loved one might be let out of prison.

WHO CAN HELP ME THROUGH MY GRIEF?

Dealing with the murder of a loved one is overwhelming and can sometimes feel unbearable. You do not have to deal with these feelings on your own. There are a wide range of services that are available for homicide survivors at various stages of their grieving process. You can also turn to your own personal support network for help—your friends, family, place of worship, family doctor and other members of your community can often be a strong source of support.

You should understand however, that some friends or family members may not know how to talk to you or how to help you. Sometimes, these people will distance themselves from you and your grief, and may not feel comfortable talking to you again for a very long time. It is important to remember that the distance between you and these people was a result of their actions and feelings, and not because you are grieving incorrectly or can't "get over it." There is no wrong way to grieve.

To assist you through your grief or for information on specific services that provide support for homicide survivors, contact the Calgary Police Service Victim Assistance Support Team at 403-428-8398.

You should know that while many types of professional services are free, others are not. Please refer to the list at the end of this booklet for local agencies, services and related fees.

HOW DO DIFFERENT MEMBERS OF MY FAMILY GRIEVE AND COPE WITH HOMICIDE?

CHILDREN

Just like adults, not all children experience grief in the same way, or show the same signs of grief. Depending on the age of the child, it is hard for them to understand the concept that a parent or sibling is "dead". Below are some points that parents and other adults in a child's life can use to help a child understand their grief:

- ◆ Regardless of age, children should be told of their loved one's death as soon as possible and in an honest way.
- ◆ One good way to explain death to children who might not understand what "dead" means is to tell them that the person's body stopped working.
- ◆ Provide safety and security for the child so that they know it's okay to express their feelings.
- ◆ Using activities such as reading books or watching video tapes, making up stories, drawing pictures, and playing or acting can help children to express their feelings. Children sometimes find it easier to have characters in a story or picture, or a stuffed animal, talk for them, and express *their* feelings through *those* characters.
- ◆ Clarify any misconceptions that children might have about why their loved one has died. Reassure them that the death was not their fault. If you are crying, tell them that crying is how you express your sadness because you miss that person; you are not crying because of something that they did. An adult who shows and talks about their feelings with their children helps the child to understand death, and how to deal with their own feelings.

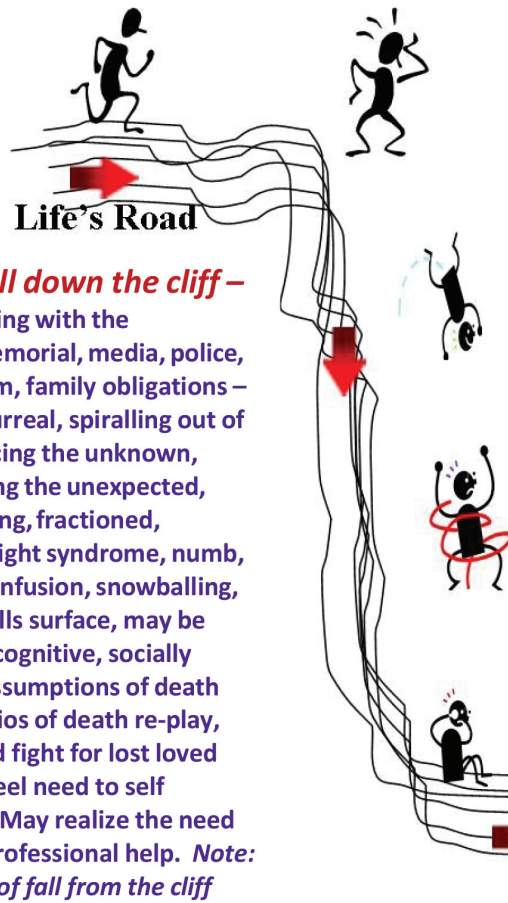
Grieving behaviours in children vary greatly, and sometimes it may not even seem like they are grieving. Below are a few of the ways that children may express their grief:

Children younger than age 2: These children do not fully understand the meaning of loss or death, they know that something is different but they do not know what it is. Children at this age are sensitive to the feelings of adults, and therefore often become more fussy than usual.

Past
Past

1. Stepped off the cliff!

Living through the experience and/or being told of “the murder”. Feeling like this can’ be happening.



2. The fall down the cliff –

While dealing with the funeral/memorial, media, police, legal system, family obligations – Free fall, surreal, spiralling out of control, facing the unknown, experiencing the unexpected, disconcerting, fractioned, disbelief, flight syndrome, numb, floating, confusion, snowballing, survival skills surface, may be rational & cognitive, socially isolated, assumptions of death and scenarios of death re-play, protect and fight for lost loved one, may feel need to self medicate. May realize the need and seek professional help. *Note: the length of fall from the cliff may depend on the relationship with the lost loved one.*

Homicide Grief

As described by the
Homicide Grief Group
Calgary, Alta. Oct. 30, 2006

3. Into the pit of despair –

Some of the same feelings and experiences as the cliff. May be dealing with potential court appearances or lack of justice – Crash, fractured, guilt, hurt, anger, hatred, despair, grief, overwhelmed, can’t seem to function, nightmares, insomnia, can’t get out of bed, tired, headaches, chest pain, stomach aches, many different physical symptoms, restricted abilities, confusion, void, don’t think you can go any lower but then step into quicksand, immobilized, distracted, suicidal thoughts, emotional pain, isolated, may feel different than other people, changed, can’t think, fog, memory loss, apathy, intolerance, feel like you’re losing your mind, scenarios of death re-play. Eventually start to see the base of the mountain.

6. The Summit – The “new normal”. Very different than before. Able to constructively co-exist with our loss. Perhaps partial or complete reconciliation of loved ones death. Able to feel joy and happiness again. Occasional back-sliding. Better coping abilities. Stronger. More resilient.

Future
Future

5. Climbing the mountain –

Many different roads. Often confusion on the best and shortest way to the top. Frequent down-slides often triggered by birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, court appearances, calls from lawyers, police or prosecutors office. Able to recognize the significant in seemingly insignificant acts (ie. getting out of bed). See ourselves moving forward.

4. Base Camp – Realization. Can’t stay in the pit anymore, too painful.

Able to make the decision to climb the mountain. Seek help and guidance. Motivated to move forward by the negative emotions of the pit and encouragement from family and friends. Also motivated by our lost loved ones wish for us to live a good life and not letting the murderer take another life (ours). Wishing to keep our own power and public acknowledgement of justice and even injustice.



Grief Support Program 2014

Children between the ages of 3 and 6: These children often think that any major change in their lives is a result of their actions or wishes, and may feel responsible for the loss of their loved one. If they see a loss as a threat, they may think that they are being punished for something. These children may react to loss by being afraid to be alone or to leave the people they love. They may not want to sleep alone at night and may refuse to go to daycare or school. Children this age may express feelings of grief by developing eating, sleeping, or toileting problems.

Children between the ages of 6 and 10: Children this age still do not always fully understand loss and death. They may understand only part of what is going on around them and they may invent conclusions, or draw the wrong conclusions, about things they do not understand, resulting in misconceptions about what is happening. At this age, children may act out or find that they cannot concentrate well because they do not fully understand the changes in their lives and have difficulty expressing how they feel.

Children between the ages of 10 and 12: These children begin to understand death the way adults do. They see death as permanent and irreversible. They are curious about what and how things happen. If a person close to them dies, they may want to know how bodies are prepared after death, what the rites and rituals of burial mean, and what happens to a person after he or she dies.

Teenagers: Fearing the vulnerability that comes with expression, teenagers often look for distractions rather than stay with the grief process long enough to find real relief. Teens sometimes forget that the death has affected other people too, and that their parents and other siblings are also dealing with their own grief. Teens may feel like their parents or siblings are ignoring them, or that they don't care about how deeply the murder has affected them. Peer support has been found to be one of the best ways that teens can cope with their grief, as a teenager's social circle and support of their friends is as important to them as the support of their family, however, this type of support should never *replace* that of a parent's.

SIBLINGS

Siblings of homicide victims may experience some aspects of grief in unique ways because of their specific relationship with the victim, as well as their relationship with other members of the family. As the sibling of a homicide victim, you may:

- ◆ Feel alone; siblings are often very close, and losing your best friend or confidant can make you feel like there is no one who would understand your feelings like your brother or sister would.
- ◆ Believe that you cannot or should not express your feelings with other members of the family because you want to protect them from additional pain. However, it is healthier if all members of the family can share their feelings and support each other through this difficult time.
- ◆ Feel long-term guilt when you begin to move forward in your life. Getting married, owning a home, having children, or travelling may trigger this guilt because you are experiencing things that your brother or sister will never have the chance to.
- ◆ Have to assist in taking care of younger siblings or even your parents for a period of time, which may lead to feelings of anxiety, stress, frustration, or like your family members do not seem to understand that you too are experiencing intense grief.
- ◆ If you are still living with your parent(s), you may become over protected or restricted, as your parents do not want you to suffer the same death as your sibling suffered.

All of the above are things that siblings of homicide victims have reported experiencing at one point or another through their grief. Siblings should know that it is okay to feel this way and that expressing these emotions to other family members can be very healing both for themselves and the other members of their family.

PARENTS

The grief experienced by parents is very unique and intense. Parents often find that coping with their grief is much more difficult because in the natural order of life, they feel they should not outlive their children. Living with the reality that their child has died before them is very difficult to accept, and can sometimes lead to feelings of guilt.

Both parents may feel that they have failed in their role as protector; they did not save their child from being murdered, even if there was nothing they could have done to stop it.

Fathers may have difficulty with their grief because men often keep their emotions to themselves. Some men feel that being overly emotional is, or is viewed as, a sign of weakness. At a time like this, they may feel they are expected to be the “strong” one, for the sake of the family. Being overly emotional may seem inappropriate to them for these reasons. Furthermore, men are more likely to be restoration-oriented. They want things to be repaired and to be returned to normal as soon as possible. Unfortunately, this reaction can be misinterpreted by their partner as not caring about their child who has died, and may lead to resentment.

For mothers, grief is often expected to be visible and intense. Women tend to be loss-oriented and are often more concerned with their feelings. They focus on their loss and the emotions they are experiencing. They frequently need to recall, be reminded of and share memories of the child who has died. It is important to know that both parents of homicide victims will experience grief and that both should be allowed to grieve openly, in their own way, and without judgment by others.

There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that the stress of losing a child to murder leads to a higher divorce rate among grieving parents. The cause of this has been attributed to the differences in needs from each parent while they are grieving. For example, while one parent may come to a point where they do not want to talk about how their child died or be involved in the trial or correction processes anymore and only wants to focus on how they lived, the other parent may feel the need to be involved at every stage along the way. These different methods of coping can lead to feelings of resentment from both parents, as each feels that the other is not providing the type of support that they need. These feelings (and resulting divorce if it occurs) can have a ripple effect and can negatively impact other members of the family as well. It is therefore important for both parents to be supportive and responsive to their partner’s grief, but also to allow themselves emotional space to experience their grief on their own terms.

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS THAT I CAN DO TO HELP ME TO COPE WITH MY GRIEF?

1. Allow yourself to grieve and do not try to suppress feelings of loss, despair, anger, depression etc. In order to overcome grief it is necessary to experience these emotions and to accept them.
2. Do not try to rush the grieving process by pressuring yourself with expectations as to when you should stop feeling a certain way, or start feeling another way.
3. Turn to family and friends for emotional and practical support. These are the people who will be there for you when you need someone to cry with or someone to listen to you. If help is needed to plan funeral arrangements, prepare meals, child care, or to get to and from the court house, friends and family will be there to assist you.
4. Try to balance the time you spend doing activities or in the company of family and friends with some alone time.
5. Try to maintain a routine. This will help you to keep a sense of security at a time full of turmoil.
6. Take care of yourself by eating a healthy diet, doing physical activities, and getting adequate rest (this doesn’t necessarily mean sleep, but could include things such as going for a walk, having a hot bath, or reading a book).
7. Seek professional assistance to help you make sense of your emotions and to learn healthy ways of coping.
8. Seek support groups to attend with other homicide survivors. Some survivors feel that only other survivors can truly understand what they are going through and talking to them is often very therapeutic.
9. Take part in, or establish a meaningful event in which you can keep the memory of your loved one alive. For example, some survivors find that holding candlelight vigils or similar events are very helpful in making them feel closer to their loved one.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

MEDIA:

“If the Media Calls: A guide for Crime Victims and Survivors”

Website: <http://crcvc.ca/publications/if-the-media-calls/>

INVESTIGATIONAL RESOURCES:

Office of the Chief Medical Examiner: 403-297-8123

Website: www.justice.alberta.ca/programs_services/fatality/ocme/Pages/

FINANCIAL RESOURCES:

Canada Pension Plan: 1-800-277-9914

Death benefit is a one-time payment to, or on behalf of, the estate of a deceased Canada Pension Plan contributor;

The survivor's pension is a monthly pension paid to the surviving spouse or common-law partner of a deceased contributor;

The children's benefit is a monthly benefit for dependent children. You must complete an [application form](#).

Allowance for the survivor is a monthly, non-taxable benefit to low-income widowed spouses who are not eligible for Old Age Security pension.

Go to: www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/services/pensions/after-death.shtml

Alberta Supports Contact Centre 1-877-644- 9992 (toll free in Alberta)

In the province of Alberta, no one is ever denied the dignity of a funeral.

If a family is unable to pay, the government department of Alberta Family and Social Services can provide assistance for basic funeral services, a casket, and cemetery or cremation fees.

Go to: www.programs.alberta.ca/Living/5959.aspx?N=770+5251

Federal Income Support for Parents of Murdered or Missing Children

Income support grant available to applicants who have suffered a loss of income from taking time away from work to cope with the death or disappearance of their child or children, as a result of a probable Criminal Code offence

Go to www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/sc/pmmc/ebrochure.shtml for full information.

Alberta Victims of Crime Financial Benefits Program-Death Benefit

The death benefit is available to persons who paid the funeral costs of a victim who died as a result of a violent crime in Alberta. The application must meet the eligibility requirements (Maximum benefit \$12,500).

Go to: www.solgps.alberta.ca/programs_and_services/victim_services/

The Last Post Fund: Funeral and Burial Program (Toll Free: 1-800-465-7113)

The Veterans Affairs Canada Funeral and Burial Program ensures that eligible Veterans receive dignified funeral and burial services.

For eligibility criteria go to: www.lastpostfund.ca

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada

Manages the estate of a deceased First Nation individual who lived on a reserve before death.

Website: www.aboriginalandnorthernaffairsdevelopmentcanada/decendentestatesprogram

GRIEF RESOURCES

FOR ADULTS:

Alberta Health Services – Grief Support Program: 403-955-8011

The Grief Support Program provides individual and group support. (no fee) Bob Glasgow Grief Support Centre, 1820 Richmond Rd. S.W.

Website: www.albertahealthservices.ca/4072.asp

Calgary Counselling Centre: 403-691-5991

Long term counseling for individuals, families and couples – sliding scale fees

Website: www.calgarycounselling.com

Distress Center 24-Hour Crisis Line: 403-266-HELP (4357)

Professional crisis counsellors provide no-fee, face-to-face counselling for individuals, groups and families.

Teen Line: 403-264-TEEN (8336)

Website: www.distresscentre.com

Eastside Family Counseling Centre: 403-299-9696

Immediate walk-in counseling for youth, individuals and families (no fee, short term) 255, 495-36 St. N.E., Northgate Mall

Website: www.woodshomes.ca/index.php?page=eastside-family-centre

FOR CHILDREN:

Hospice Calgary: 403-263-4525

Individual and group counseling for bereaved children and teenagers, coinciding with a group for parents on “parenting grieving children”. (no fee, lending library)

Website: www.hospicecalgary.com

Kids Help Phone: 1-800-688-6868 (24/7)

Providing 24/7 phone support for kids up to 18 – no fee

Website: www.kidshelpphone.ca

PEER SUPPORT:

Notes:

Calgary Homicide Support Society

Professionally facilitated support group to lessen the suffering and trauma of family members following the violent death of a loved one. The group offers emotional and practical support to others who share this common experience. The group will meet one evening per month for two hours. Open to adult family members (over 18).

No fee.

Website: www.CalgaryHSS.com

Alive Alone: 403-276-2296

A support group for bereaved parents who do not have surviving children. The group meets through McInnis & Holloway Funeral Homes.

Contact: Kathy Cloutier – No fee

The Compassionate Friends: 1-866-823-0141

Calgary@tcfcanada.net or tcfcalgary@outlook.com

Self-help group for bereaved parents. Meet every third Monday of the month at First Evangelical Free Church, Elbow Drive and 55th Ave SW, Calgary, newsletter and a lending library. – No fee www.tcfcanada.net

Canadian Parents of Murdered Children (Parents): 613-492-1978

Providing ongoing emotional support, education and assistance to all survivors of homicide victims. Website: www.cpomc.ca/

PUBLICATIONS:

Compassionate Friends – Supporting family after a child dies

www.compassionatefriends.org/resource/Store/BrochuresExclusivelyAvailable.aspx

Bereavement Publications - www.livingwithloss.com

Centre for Loss and Life Transition - www.centerforloss.com/

Hospice Calgary - www.hospicecalgary.com/

For additional resources contact:

Calgary Police Service Victim Assistance Support Team

5111-47 Street N.E. Calgary, Alberta

T3J 3R2

or

Call 403-428-8398 or 1-888-327-7828 (toll free)

Monday to Thursday 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Friday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Notes:

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Presented by Victims of Violence and the Calgary Police Service



