

Suggestions for Survivors of Murder

Someone you love has been murdered. Your whole world has been thrown into chaos and uncertainty. You feel vulnerable. Over time and with the help of other supportive people, you will get through this terrible time. Some of the following suggestions may be helpful.

- Know you can survive. You may not think so but you can.
- Struggle with why it happened until you no longer need to know why or until you are satisfied with partial answers.
- Know you may be overwhelmed by the intensity of your feelings but all your feelings are a natural reaction to what has happened.
- Anger, guilt, confusion, forgetfulness are common responses. You are not crazy; you are in mourning.
- Be aware you may feel anger at the murderer, the person who died, the world, at God, at yourself. It's okay to express it.
- You may feel guilty for what you think you did or did not do to maybe prevent it. Guilt can turn into regret through forgiveness.
- Having suicidal thoughts is common. It does not mean that you will act on those thoughts.
- Find a good listener with whom to share. Call someone if you need to talk.
- Don't be afraid to cry. Tears are healing.
- Give yourself time to heal.
- If emotions return like a tidal wave, you may only be experiencing a remnant of grief, an unfinished piece. Grieving is like a roller coaster ride.
- Try to put off major decisions like moving or changing jobs.
- Give yourself permission to get professional help.
- Be aware of the pain of your family and friends.
- Be patient with yourself and others who may not understand.
- Set your own limits and learn to say 'no' when someone asks something of you that you are not up to doing.
- Steer clear of people who want to tell you what or how to feel.

- Know that there are support groups that can be helpful.
- Call on your personal faith to help you through.
- Know it is common to experience physical reactions to your grief eg. headache, loss of appetite, inability to sleep, irritability or restlessness.
- Have the willingness to laugh with others or at yourself.
- Wear out your questions, anger, guilt or other feelings until you can let them go. Letting go doesn't mean forgetting.
- Know that you will never be the same again, but you can survive and even go beyond just surviving.
- Take time for you; read, remember, write, look at pictures, draw pain, soak in a tub.
- Eat healthy food. Your mental health is affected by your physical health.
- Drug and alcohol misuse will only deaden and prolong the pain when grieving. It will be there when the effects wear off.
- Keep a regular schedule that includes exercising. Keep lists to help you remember what you are suppose to be doing.
- Make a memory book with favorite pictures or write a goodbye letter.
- Try to do things that bring you pleasure.
- Accept that people will say incredibly insensitive and hurtful things when you are grieving because they may be totally unaware or do not know what to say.
- Give yourself permission to have rough times. Especially on birthdays, holidays, and anniversaries.
- Dealing with grief means learning how to forgive yourself and others. This may take time.
- Good self-care is nurturing and necessary for mourners, yet it is something that many of us completely overlook.
- Try very hard to eat well and get adequate rest. Lay your body down two to three times a day for 20 to 30 minutes, even if you don't sleep. You probably don't care very much about eating well right now and you may be sleeping poorly. However, taking care of yourself is truly one way to fuel healing and begin to embrace life again.

- Drink at least five to six glasses of water each day. Dehydration can compound feelings of fatigue and disorientation.
- Exercise not only provides you with more energy, but it can give you focused thinking time. Take a 20 minute walk each day. Or, if that seems too much, a five minute walk. Don't over exercise because your body needs extra rest as well.
- Now more than ever allow time for you.

Please remember that grieving is different for everyone and there is not a "right" or "wrong" way to grieve. Emotions may come in ways or when you least expect it. Just because you suddenly have a bad day does not mean that you are failing to recover. The most important thing is to realize you do not have to go through this alone. Survivors of Homicide is available whenever you need us at 860.257.7388.

Adapted from AARP ,GriefWorksBC, and Compassionate Friends of Connecticut