



## Aspects Of Grief After A Violent Death

### PERSONS WHO EXPERIENCE A HOMICIDE OR OTHER VIOLENT DEATH TEND TO:

- Experience the impact of a sudden, unexpected, violent death with the possibility of a mutilated body, or no body at all.
- Feel insecure, fearful, and have concerns for their safety.
- Question their own basic beliefs and values about the importance of human life and behaviors.
- Experience tremendous family stress as each person is grieving differently and each needs additional support.
- Have a great deal of guilt over not having protected their loved one.
- Feel the stigma of having a family member murdered, with people believing that only criminal types are murdered.
- Lose their support system because people don't know what to say and tend to stay away.
- Be ignored, mistreated and receive little information from law enforcement officials assigned to the case.
- Postpone their grief until after the trial and sentencing.
- Find that whatever the sentence the murder receives, it is not enough to compensate for their loss.
- Become victimized as a result of media coverage, for months and sometimes years after the death.
- Experience intense anger, rage and sometimes revenge, which is overwhelming and produces within them fear of their own response.

# Concerns For Children Who Are Affected By A violent Death

## Fear of the Death:

- Their Own Death
- Death of Those Who Protect Them, Such as a Parent
- Death of Friends and Loved Ones

## Anxiety About:

- Being Left Alone
- Sleeping Alone
- Leaving the Surviving Family Members

## Regression:

- Clingy, Irritable Behavior
- Need for More Holding, Hugs and Nurturance
- Possible Bedwetting

## Sleep Disorder:

- Nightmares
- Fear of Going to Bed
- Not Able to Get to Sleep or Waking Throughout the Night

## Somatic Complaints:

- Stomachaches, Headaches, Heartaches

## Eating Habit Changes

Reliving The Violent Experience In Play Or In Memory.

Change In School Behavior And Reduced Ability To Concentrate.

## Affect Change:

- Risk Taking and More Aggressive
- Hopeless, Depressed, Inhibited

Desire Not To Stand Out Or Be Different

# Complications For Persons Who Experience A Violent Death

## Psychological Trauma

- Suddenness of the Death
- Inability to Say Goodbye
- Intentional Destructive Nature of the Act
- Willful Disrespect for Life

Last Memory Of Person May Be Mutilated, Bloody Body.

Fear For Own Or Caretaker's Safety.

## Conflict Of Values

- Value or Worth of Human Life
- Shattered View of World Being Safe
- Won't Happen to Me

Feelings Of Powerlessness, Guilt, Anger, And/Or Revenge.

Difficulty In Understanding And Accepting "Why" Because Of The Violent Nature Of The Death.

True Story Not Always Known Or Shared Honestly In Order To "Protect" The Love One.

## Community Reaction

- Stigma or Criminal Element Associated with Murder
- "Blame The Victim" Attitude
- Isolation of Family, Withdrawal of Support

## Media Attention, Sensationalizing, Revictimizing

- Families often hear the information for the first time on the news.
- Media does not respect the privacy and grief of family.
- Story retold over and over for several months or even years after the death

## Law Enforcement

- Criminal Sometimes Not Found
- Lengthy Investigation
- Family not Adequately Informed of Progress or Lack of It
- Persons Not allowed to Talk About Their Situation During Investigation

## Criminal and Judicial System

- Proceedings Often Postponed/ Delayed for Months or Years
- Families Required to Tell and Retell the Painful Story
- Accused Person Often Plea Bargains, Getting a Light Sentence
- Sentence Never Enough to Justify the Death of the Loved One

*\*\* information adapted with permission from Hospice of Metro Denver*