

NATIONAL RESOURCES

Compassionate Friends

www.compassionatefriends.org
(877) 969-0010

Mothers Against Drunk Driving

www.madd.org

National Center for Victims of Crime

www.victimsofcrime.org
(202) 467-8700

National Domestic Violence Resource Center

www.nrcdv.org
1-(800) 799-7233

National Sexual Violence Resource Center

www.nsvrc.org
(877) 739-3895

Office for Victims of Crime

www.ovc.gov

Parents of Murdered Children

www.pomc.org
(888) 818-7662



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This information is not intended to be a substitute for the role of professionals with expertise in grief counseling.

U.S. Department of Justice
Federal Bureau of Investigation



*Coping
with
Grief*

Nothing in life can prepare you for the sudden and traumatic death of a loved one. No one expects this to occur. People who experience trauma have a wide range of reactions. These reactions may feel abnormal or seem strange. You may feel like something is wrong with you and that the terrible pain will never ease.

Practical Ideas for Coping

When you receive the initial death notification, you may feel immobilized. You may experience feelings of shock, disbelief, and denial as you hear the notification. You are trying to process all of the information that it is being shared with you. You may also have many questions. As you process all of this information, your senses may become more heightened. Many people can remember a traumatic experience clearly with something they have smelled, seen, heard, touched, or tasted. Your heart rate and blood pressure may dramatically increase. There are many emotions that can be experienced during this time including fear, anger, confusion, shame, guilt, and grief. At times, this may feel like an emotional roller coaster. You may feel exhausted and tire easy. It may be helpful to visit a medical professional if any of these symptoms persist for an extended period of time. Recovering from a traumatic event will take time and may not be easy. Everyone responds differently to trauma. No one is reacting in a right or wrong way—just differently. Don't expect too much of yourself and of others.

- Ask questions. You may wonder what type of assistance is available and what will happen next. Find out what will be expected of you in days to come, so you can plan ahead for any new stressful circumstances.
- Keep a notebook handy. You can record your thoughts and questions in this notebook so you won't forget them.
- Delay making major decisions whenever possible. You may think a big change will make you feel better. It may not necessarily ease the pain. Give yourself time to get through the most hectic times and adjust before making decisions that will affect the rest of your life.
- Remember to breathe. Close your eyes and take deep, slow breaths until you feel calm.
- Simplify your life for awhile. Make a list of things that you are responsible for in your life. Then look at your list and see which things are absolutely necessary. Is there anything you can put aside for awhile? Are there things you can let go of completely?
- Take care of your mind and body. Eat healthy food and exercise regularly. Exercise may help improve your mood and help you sleep better too.
- Avoid using alcohol and illegal drugs. These substances may temporarily block the pain, but they will keep you from healing.
- Establish new routines.
- Avoid overtaxing yourself with too much activity.
- Keep the phone number of a good friend nearby to call when you feel overwhelmed or begin to feel a sense of panic.
- Rely on people you trust. Seek information, advice, and help from them.
- Seek professional assistance when needed. Just as there are doctors and nurses who are trained to help heal the body, there are professionals who are trained to help people recover from loss and cope with emotional pain.

