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 trail 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
- Suddeness 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 **