

## 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.
- Experience changes in 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:

- Need for more holding, hugs and nurturance
- Clingy, irritable behavior
- Possible bedwetting

## Sleep Disorder:

- Fear of going to bed
- Not able to get to sleep or waking throughout the night
- Nightmares

## 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, Re-victimizing

- Families can 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 Lighter Sentence
- Sentence Never Enough to Justify the Death of the Loved One

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