

Basics for Coping with the Traumatic Death of a Loved One

It is important for grievers to take care of themselves following a sudden loss. This means dealing with an event that is completely beyond your control. As a result, it will be important to do things that help you regain a sense of control over your world. It is also important to focus on the basic needs for day-to-day survival:

- Maintain a normal routine. Even if it is difficult to do regular activities, try anyway. Putting more structure into a daily routine will help establish a feeling of more control.
- Get enough sleep, or at least plenty of rest.
- It may be helpful to keep lists, write notes, or keep a schedule.
- Try to get some regular exercise. This can help relieve stress and tension.
- Keep a balanced diet. Watch out for junk food or high calorie comfort food binges.
- Drink plenty of water.
- If you use alcohol, be sure to drink in moderation. Be careful not to increase the amount that you normally drink. While it is understandable that you do not want to hurt so much, alcohol should not be used as a way of masking the pain.
- Find healthy, constructive ways to comfort sustain and recharge yourself.
- Remember other difficult times and how you survived them.
- Draw upon your inner strength.
- Take it one day at a time, one hour at a time, or sometimes one minute at a time.

It is human nature, to ask "Why." There will be times when other questions will also be important to ask. For example, you may find it helpful to ask, "What can I do about it now?" "How can I help?" or "How do I pick up the pieces and go on living as meaningfully as possible?"

Sudden, traumatic loss, like all loss, is very distinct and is likely to affect mourners in many different ways. While you will experience many reactions in common with other mourners, traumatic loss creates its own unique issues. It is important to allow yourself and your loved ones to mourn in unique ways. It *does not help* to compare your mourning to the mourning of others. The greatest loss is the one that you are mourning right now. Traumatic loss leaves mourners bereaved, dazed and vulnerable, but it is possible for you to eventually reconcile with the death and move forward in your life, finding new meaning and purpose, without the physical presence of your loved ones.

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