

Unexpected Sudden Death

When you lose someone you love it's a significant loss in your life. Sudden death may complicate your bereavement. The grief reactions you may have from the sudden loss may challenge you in ways that are unfamiliar to you.

When the death of your loved one is both sudden and unexpected, you did not have an opportunity to prepare yourself for it. And when the death is also traumatic, it may have been accompanied by other complicating circumstances, such as violence.

What can you do to help yourself after a sudden loss? You cannot change or alter the sudden reality of the death or the circumstances in which it occurred even though you may wish you could change what occurred with all your heart and soul. There still are things you can do to begin the process of transforming the feeling of being victimized into one of a true survivor.

Common Reactions

It is common to experience strong and often surprising reactions to the death. You may feel profound anger, disbelief, sadness, numbness or an inability to think or reason, these are to be expected and should not be rushed or suppressed. You must travel down this path at your own pace.

Honor your reactions

This is your loss and your reactions are yours alone. You are living these feelings because you loved the person who passed on and because you've been hurt by what has happened. You have every right to feel and experience these reactions. When your loss is suddenly and a result of deliberate, carelessness, disaster or malicious behavior, it is likely to hit you hard and complicate your mourning.

Be kind to yourself

Deaths that are unexpected and involve violence or trauma, may challenge your core beliefs about your religion and spirituality, the world, yourself and humanity. This is understandable, be patient with yourself. You will need time to assimilate what has happened into your belief system and you may even discover the need to alter some of the assumptions that you might have previously held.

One day at a time

You may experience unexpected, sudden episodes of grief. You may never be the same as you were before and you may feel as if you don't recognize yourself but as time goes on, you will begin to feel better than you do now. You won't ever be the same but you may be able to create and add to the "you". Be patient with yourself and just do the best that you can, one day at a time.

Mourning is work

Mourning is a process. It is hard work to move through all the phases that are unique to your own situation. You will try to find ways to live with your losses and your reactions to those losses. As time goes on you will learn to live with your loss and your grief. It can be painful to engage in this process. Do the work and allow yourself to move through your emotions and feelings so you can go on with living and loving.

Write

Writing your thoughts and feelings in a journal may allow you to "say" things that might be too difficult to voice out loud or to another person, it may become cathartic and healing. Later, sometimes years later, you will discover and be able to measure the progress you have made. You may feel as if you haven't made progress until you have had the opportunity to review from whence you have traveled.

Connecting with Others

Seek help from others when you need to do so. Your friends and family members may not know how to help you and may withdraw from you. They may become afraid of the intensity and duration of your grief. Try to forgive their weaknesses, but try to be clear about what kind of help and support you want. Seek others such as support groups who are outside your friends and family circle or others who have encountered similar losses. Understanding, support and guidance are often best provided by people who have suffered similar losses.

You'll always remember your loved one

Many people worry about losing the memory of their loved one. Moving through and with your grief doesn't mean forgetting, and likewise beginning to feel better doesn't mean you don't love them. It is common when you begin to feel better to feel guilty for having happy moments, laughing or wanting to enjoy yourself, feeling better is also a legacy of love to the one you lost. Finally, remember that you matter and your future matters. Honor the person you loved and lost by learning to live your life fully, albeit differently.

In Memory

You may discover an unexpected venue with which to honor your loved one. It may be as simple as planting a tree in memory, donate a bench at a park, or as big as creating a foundation, nothing is too small or insignificant. Don't feel guilty if you don't have the energy or desire to do anything, you are very busy and working hard to heal, that in itself is an accomplishment and can be dedicated to your love one.