

How to Care for Yourself and for Others: A Guide for Family and Friends of Homicide Victims

Losing a loved one through an act of violence is very traumatic and changes your life forever. No one can ever be prepared for this kind of loss. The offender's eligibility for parole will likely stir up many feelings and reactions that you may not be ready to deal with. You may feel like you are reliving the trauma of the crime all over again, as it brings about sadness and anger about how the death occurred. Providing input to the Parole Board can also be very emotional and cause fear and anxiety about the outcome.

You may react differently than your other family members and friends, but that is okay. Remember that no two people grieve the same way or take the same amount of time to work through all of the feelings that come out.

Grief can provoke many reactions, but remember these are normal.



Emotional Responses

Shock, anger, despair, denial, numbness, terror, guilt, sadness, irritability, loss of pleasure or happiness from regular activities, emotional outbursts, feeling empty or hollow, feeling spacey, overwhelming sense of loss.

Physical Responses

Tired, difficulty sleeping, jumpiness, chills, increased heart rate or blood pressure, nausea, feeling sick, worry, anxiety, difficulty remembering things, loss of appetite, flashbacks of the crime

Responses to Others

Isolation from friends and family, avoiding social activities, increased conflict with others, difficulty at work or school, desire for revenge, family arguing and distance

Steps for Healing and Coping

- Be honest about your feelings
- Find a safe way to release your anger
- Admit that you may need help
- Allow yourself to cry
- Allow yourself time to recover
- Do not compare your grief with others, everyone is different
- Surround yourself with supportive people
- Do not blame yourself
- Hold onto your memories and share them with others
- Be patient and tolerant with yourself, healing takes time

Helping Your Friend or Loved One Cope

Listen – try not to offer advice or wisdom, just be there for them

Encourage them to express their feelings if they can

Be non-judgmental – expect anger and feelings of revenge

Help Find Resources – gather information about helpful resources and support groups

Help with Daily Chores – they may not have the energy or focus to take care of daily tasks

Let them Heal at their own pace and do not rush them

Pennsylvania Resources

PCCD-Victim Compensation Assistance Program
1.800.233.2339

www.pccd.state.pa.us

PA Coalition Against Rape (PCAR)
24 hour hot line: 888.772.PCAR

www.pcar.org

PA Coalition Against Domestic Violence (PCADV)
1.800.932.4632

www.pcadv.org

SAVIN – www.vinelink.com

You may contact OVA at 1.800.563.6399 for local referrals or visit <http://www.ova.state.pa.us>