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| **Judicial System**  This may be your first involvement with law enforcement or the judicial system. It’s very common for people to expect what they have seen on television or in movies to apply to their current circumstances. Unfortunately, these expectations are often unrealistic or a distorted snapshot of how things truly operate.  There are laws and regulations in place aimed at protecting victims. For cases involving prosecution, court advocates may be available to provide information, education, and support that will help reduce your fears and uncertainties (e.g., discussing what to expect when you go to court).  Education and information about how the judicial system works, your rights, and your role can help you navigate these processes.  **Benefits of Counseling**  Some benefits to seeking counseling:   * Coping skills and strategies can help you to continue daily activities and relationships. * Establishing a support network can help to decrease the negative physical, psychological, and emotional effects that often result from traumatic experiences. * In a confidential setting, you can discuss topics such as:   + Safety planning and options for the future.   + The event and how it made you feel.   + Legal and judicial decisions. | |  | | --- | | **Who Can Help?**  [*Agency*] Victim Services can assist you with information regarding victims’ rights, Crime Victim Compensation, case status, navigation of the criminal justice system, and referrals to the appropriate community resources or helping professionals or organizations according to your specific needs.  **Resources**  Local Resources  [*Insert state Crime Victims’ Compensation information*]  [*Insert other relevant local resources*]  National Resource  **Victim Information and Notification Everyday (VINE)**  1-877-894-8463  [www.vinelink.com](http://www.vinelink.com)  **Victim Connect Resource Center**  855-484-2846  [www.victimconnect.org/learn/types-of-crime/homicide-and-grief](http://www.victimconnect.org/learn/types-of-crime/homicide-and-grief)  **The Compassionate Friends**  [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)  **National Organization for Victim Assistance**  800-879-6682  [www.trynova.org](http://www.trynova.org)  This publication was produced under [*Grant Number*] awarded by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this draft publication are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the U.S. Department of Justice.  [*Revision Date*] | | |  | | --- | | **Co-Victims of Homicide**  **[*Agency*] Victim**  **Adult Grief and Loss**  **Adult Grief and Loss**  **Services**  **[*address*]**  **[*phone number*]**  **[*Insert Agency logo*]**  **[insert Agency logo]**  **[insert Agency logo]**  **[insert Agency logo]**  Name/ID Number:  Direct Number: | |
| If you have lost someone you know and love to homicide, your life has been changed forever. Your anger and pain may be deep. You may feel as if you will never recover, but with determination and time, you can learn to manage your grief.  **Common Responses**  ***You may experience emotions (in no particular order) such as:***  **SHOCK—** At first, youare likely to feel a profound numbness. Some liken it to “being in a fog.” This fog may allow you to accomplish the necessary activities for final arrangements and other duties.  **TURMOIL—**When the fog clears, you may experience a variety of emotions. You may have flashbacks of the moments you were notified of the death, or the last time you saw your loved one alive. You may dream of your loved one or believe that they will soon “walk through that door.” Part of you may deny that your loved one is really gone.  You may experience the following:   * Uncontrolled crying. * Panic attacks and feeling afraid for your life or the lives of loved ones. * Restlessness or trouble concentrating. * Trouble sleeping at night or finding it very hard to get out of bed in the morning.   Activities that you once enjoyed may seem like a burden. You may feel as if there is little point in going on, or you may want to withdraw from everyone.  During all these responses, you should keep talking with people you trust and who will listen with a non-judgmental ear.  **SEARCH FOR UNDERSTANDING—**You will probably experience a great need to understand why this tragedy happened. In your search for understanding, you may feel the need to know what happened, where it happened, and who did it. If someone is arrested, you may want to know as much as you can about that person.  You may expect the criminal justice system to work more quickly and keep you better informed than it does. If an arrest is made, you may decide to attend court hearings as a part of your search for why this happened. | If you are called as a witness at the trial, you could be barred from attending the remainder of the trial. This may contribute to unanswered questions. If there is no arrest or trial, you may feel the need to hear the explanation for that decision.  Opinions of many people may come your way about the crime, motivation, and the offender. You will probably not find the answers to all your questions.  **GUILT—**Each co-victim lives with “what-ifs.” This is a normal reaction. Please remember that no one can predict the future or recreate what might have been. You cannot change the events that took place, and blaming yourself may be damaging.  **ANGER—**Sometimes it may feel as if anger overwhelms you. It may be directed at the murderer, the criminal justice system, family members, or friends. It is common for people who hold religious or faith beliefs to feel angry or question those beliefs, values, and teachings. Many people feel guilty about their anger, but it is a completely normal reaction.  Anger may immobilize you or move you to relentless activity. With time and support, your anger can be managed and may even contribute to helping you gain back some control in your life.  **REVENGE—**For the first time in their lives, co-victims may find themselves thinking of ways to kill another human being—the killer of their loved one. Understandably, some people are deeply disturbed by this emotion. It is important to remember that having these feelings does not mean that you will act on them.  **ACCEPTANCE—**Experiencing the loss of a loved one by homicide can lead you to feel as if you are not the “same person” as before. However, it is possible to reach a place of acceptance of this “new normal.” Remember, it takes time to get to this point.  **FORGIVENESS—**After a homicide, you may experience unresolved emotions toward yourself, your lost loved one, and/or the offender. For example, you may believe that if you had taken some sort of action, you could have prevented the homicide. Over time, self-forgiveness can help resolve feelings of guilt, anger, and revenge, and can create a way to move forward and concentrate on healthy relationships or restoring your faith. | **Coping with**  **Reactions of Others**  Each person is an individual, liking different foods, wearing different clothing, and choosing their own lifestyles. It stands to reason that, at possibly the most painful time in your life, you would also grieve in your own way. How you choose to grieve is determined by your personal views of death, how society views death, and your individual personality.  **FAMILY—**When a homicide occurs, you might expect it to bring a family together. However, it is common for families to separate, both physically and emotionally. After a death, communication is very important. Express your feelings within the family in a supportive and honest way.  **FRIENDS—**When you hurt, you may turn to people who are familiar—your friends. But where are they a month, six months, or a year after the murder? Often, they have gone back to their lives, but you still need support.  Even though co-victims often need to talk about the details of the homicide, people may feel they do not have the right words to say. They may feel inadequate. The loss of your loved one probably hit them with a stark reality: If it can happen to you, it could happen to them.  **COWORKERS—**You may notice that people you have known for years avoid you. They may avert their eyes and “not see you.” They usually have no idea this feels like a rejection and only adds to your grief.  You can face this issue in various ways—stop seeing them, continue contact but avoid the subject you most need to discuss, raise the issue directly, or add other people to your circle who have lost loved ones or who are willing to share your experience.  **SUPPORT GROUPS—**You may consider joining an organized grief support group to connect with those who have experienced a similar loss. Support group members may understand your emotional reactions better than your friends and family. A support group may be a safe environment where your various reactions can be explained, validated, and supported. |