Dealing with Loss

Loss from a tragedy or traumatic event can take many forms. It might involve the loss of a loved one, a home, or a pet. It could involve a life-changing injury or illness. It might involve the loss of a sense of safety and security when a crime has been committed. Although our information generally reflects the death of a loved one, your emotional responses and the recommendations regarding your health and well-being can apply to all categories of traumatic loss.

- **The first response to your loss may be shock.** You may feel numb and like the situation is unreal. You may have moments of disbelief that your loved one is really gone. Others may want you to quickly "accept reality and get on with your life." Do not be hurried. There is no timetable. Accepting the reality of your loss may be a slow and gradual process.
- **Be involved in burial and funeral planning.** Take the time to explore the many options available to you. Plan a service that is meaningful and special to you and your family. There are no hard and fast rules. Take charge and make whatever you decide a plan which reflects you and your family's unique wishes.
- **Delay major decisions until you have recovered from the initial turmoil following a death.**
- **How to deal with children (more information)**
  - Tell the truth about what happened
  - Answer questions in a straightforward manner
  - Let the child participate in the family sorrow and in grieving rituals
  - Protect the child from imagined guilt ("I was bad – it was my fault")
  - Provide lots of love and reassurance
- **Accept your feelings.** You may find yourself experiencing a "roller coaster" of feelings for weeks and months after the loss. Do not try to escape these feelings. They are normal. You must go through them.
  - *Anger*: you may blame yourself, a family member, the deceased, or God for the loss ("Why me?")
  - *Guilt*: "If only I had done . . ."
  - *Depression*: You may feel unable to perform even basic daily tasks. You may feel "Why bother?"
- **Keep a journal.** It may help to write down how you are feeling. Re-reading it can help you see the healing that is taking place.
- **Seek help from others.**
  - *Friends and family*: Talking to those outside of the immediate family may help you express your feelings without blaming those closest to you.
  - *Professional help*: Seek professional help if despair and worthlessness persist; if your family relationships are deteriorating; or if you continue to blame yourself for what

happened.
- *Support groups*: There are support groups where you can receive support from others who have lost a loved one.
- *Nurture yourself*: Do something good for yourself on a daily basis.
- *Hope and healing*: It may take time and work, but you can survive a terrible loss. You may never completely get over the loss of a loved one, but you can live your life in the future with joy and perhaps with a new understanding and purpose.

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