



## Caring for Yourself After a Homicide

What has occurred is brutal and life changing. While there is no single way to traverse this experience, here are some things that may be helpful.

### ***Organizing Information***

You are likely going to be engaging with a variety of new individuals and larger systems, some of which may be unfamiliar with you. Keeping a notebook where you can record individual names, case numbers and important dates will assist you with managing the flow of information. Even more important, it allows you to write down questions as they occur to you, allowing you to revisit them when meeting with various individuals who will be a part of your loved ones case.

### ***Activating Supports***

Your loved ones likely want to help, but often, are not sure how. You may feel too exhausted to direct them. While times of isolation make sense in grief, allowing ourselves to be supported by those who love us is important. Here are some tangible requests you might consider making:

Take your grocery list and go to the store/Run another errand that is needed.

Organize your friends to drop off meals that can be frozen for a 2-3 week period.

Check in with me every couple of days and understand if I'm not able to text back.

Share your favorite memories with me.

It's also important to let folks know what you need. It's okay to say, "I'd like to talk about my rage but don't want to get any advice/guidance. Do you think you could listen to me vent?" OR "I really don't have the emotional bandwidth to talk about that right now, is it okay if we just sit quietly together?"

### ***Common Emotional Responses***

Grief can elicit a range of emotions. When someone dies in a traumatic way, it's possible an individual may experience flashbacks and nightmares, even if they were not there at the time of death. Below are some common emotional responses and ways you might tend to them.

Response	Tending to the Response
Feeling numb/waiting to avoid thinking/talking about the person who died.	It's okay to give yourself pauses and breaks. Some numbness and avoidance, particularly in the beginning, is protective and common.
Anger	Movement is the best medicine for anger. Walk with a friend, stomp your feet, swing your arms with large movements, find an outdoor

	space and scream, throw a ball against a wall without windows
Feeling sad and disconnected	Our impulse in these times may be to isolate. Consider if one/two individuals could listen and hold your pain with you. You can tell them what you need, “Right now what I need is for you to listen, not try to fix it or make me feel better.”
Experiencing guilt/if-only’s	This is a natural part of grief and it’s important to allow yourself to feel/think these thoughts AND it’s important to consider the broader context and what is reasonable/not reasonable in terms of what you could have known.
Difficulty sleeping	Try a bedtime ritual with progressive body relaxation, cool & dark room, being horizontal even if not asleep will help.

When in doubt, slow down. Take a few deep breaths and consider – do I need stillness or movement? Being patient and gentle with yourself is an important element of your well-being during this process.

**Special Considerations**

Social Media/The News: Often times a police-involved shooting will appear repeatedly in the news and social media. You might consider appointing someone in your life to watch for developments to share with you upon request. While we may believe we want to see and know every piece of evidence available to us, please remember you can’t unknow specific details once they are known.

While the media may tell the story from a particular perspective, remember your loved one is not defined by those stories, but by YOUR relationship to them.

Unhealthy Coping Strategies: Be alert for any significant changes in behavior that may be higher risk such as substance use, not taking medications for chronic conditions or risk-taking activities (speeding, unsafe sexual activity). You can mitigate these potential harms by self-monitoring and seeking professional support when needed.

Don’t Attach Your Healing to the Judicial Process: It is tempting to believe that once someone is held accountable for the murder of your loved one that you will be able to “move on” and heal. Not infrequently, the judicial process does not bring justice. It’s important to uncouple the process with healing form the judicial system. This looks like making choices about how you want to engage with those systems and giving yourself permission to take it day by day.

Advocacy: Some individuals channel their grief by joining with other impacted families and working together in communities for changes in policies that could have benefited your loved one.