

A sudden death “I can’t believe it.”

A sudden death

Most people experience feelings of numbness, shock and disbelief in the hours and first few days following a sudden death.

"It can't be true."

"I can't believe this is happening."

It is common for people to feel confused, dazed, bewildered and unable to comprehend what has happened. It will take some time for the full reality of the death to be accepted. Take the time you need.

Intensified grief

In situations of sudden death, there is often little or no opportunity to prepare yourself emotionally for the loss.

You may feel overwhelmed. You may feel very sad, angry, guilty or have feelings of hopelessness and helplessness.

Thoughts of the past

It is natural for people to think about the events leading up to the death of their loved one. These thoughts can help provide you with some sense of control. They can also help you to accept the reality of the death.

It is not uncommon for family members to experience some feelings of guilt. Sometimes people feel guilty for things that were beyond their control.

Like all emotions involved in mourning, guilt must be recognized and worked through.

"I can't cope."

At times you may feel like you can't cope and life may not seem worth living. These feelings are common, natural and powerful.

An understanding of normal and varied grief reactions will help you accept and deal with your feelings.

The roller coaster of emotions

Most people experience a roller coaster of emotions in the weeks and months after a sudden death.

At times, you may feel like you are OK and your emotions are stable. The next minute, day or week, you may experience overwhelming feelings of sadness and grief.

It is important to remember that these mood swings are normal and are common reactions to your loss.

What helps?

Learning to live with the loss of a loved one is not easy. This takes time and it's hard work. It is important to be patient with yourself.

Allow yourself to accept the flood of feelings as they occur.

- Sorrow, anger, despair, fear, confusion - to name only a few.

Anchor yourself in your normal daily activities.

- At a time when you feel powerless and paralyzed, try to find something you can do and do it every day.
- Regaining a small sense of control helps to rebuild your identity.

Maintain contact with others.

- Family, friends and neighbours can be of great support at this time.

Take care of yourself.

- This is a time when you may not feel like eating, and sleep is less restful.
- Remember to eat regularly and get the rest you need.

Allow yourself to mourn at your own pace.

- Everyone reacts differently to the loss of a loved one. It is difficult to know how much time you may need.

It takes time

The sudden death of a loved one is not something you "get over" or an illness from which you recover. It is a deep wound which must heal from the inside out.

Just as a scar remains after a physical injury, there will always be an emotional scar. The scar will not always interfere with your daily living, but at times it may still cause you pain.

Few people feel able to cope with the loss of a loved one alone. If you need something more than what family and friends can provide, there is other help.

Please call the hospital and ask to speak with the social worker in the Emergency Department. We will be happy to talk with you.

Please contact the Emergency Social Worker:	
Juravinski Hospital	905-389-4411, ext. 42294
Hamilton General Hospital	905-527-0271, ext. 44589