

## Bereaved Survivors of Homicide Guide

### Most Common Feelings of Grief

#### Shock

In the beginning you may feel a profound numbness; some liken it to “being in a fog” or like you are watching events happen instead of feeling like you are participating.

#### Turmoil

When you start to feel in the present, you may experience flashbacks of the moment you were notified of the death or the last time you saw your loved one. You may dream of your loved one or believe that he or she may walk through the door at any moment. You may even deny that your loved one has passed.

#### Searching 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 everything there is to know about what happened, where it happened, and who did it.

#### Guilt

As a survivor you may feel overwhelmed with feelings of “what if’s.” There are normal reactions. Please remember that no one can predict the future or re-create what might have been.

#### Anger

Anger can be both frightening and motivating. Sometime it may feel as if the anger will overwhelm you. It may be directed at the person(s) that caused your loved one’s passing, society, the criminal justice system, family members or friends. It is not uncommon to be angry at God. Many people can feel guilty at their feelings of anger, but it is completely normal to experience these feelings.

Anger may immobilize you or move you to relentless activity. It’s a common reaction to severe loss. Your anger may never completely go away, but with time and support, it can be managed and may even contribute to helping you gain back some control in your life.

#### Revenge

Experiencing feelings of wanting revenge or retribution after a homicide is common. However, having these feelings does not mean you have to act on them. You should ask yourself what can be gained/lost by such actions. You do not owe the perpetrator forgiveness, but some survivors find forgiveness as a way to cope. Only you can decide what is right for you.

## Tips for Survivors

- This time may feel overwhelming and confusing, therefore, you may want to consider assigning a Task Person to help you organize and keep track of information
- Make initial contacts with the Medical Examiner
- When selecting a Funeral Home you may want to consider:
  - What were the wishes of your loved one?
  - What type of Funeral Service (i.e., traditional funeral, memorial service, cremation, other)?
  - How will you pay for the service (i.e., self-pay, insurance policy, Victim Compensation\*)?
- Complete \*Victim Compensation Application (attached). The MGH Violence Intervention Advocacy Program (VIAP) is available to assist with the completion of the application.
- You may be contacted by the media; you are under no obligation to comment on your loved one's passing. If you do decide to talk to the media you may want to consider writing a family media statement to:
  - Ask for privacy in an instance of a high profile case;
  - Set the record straight in case of misinformation;
  - Call for peace and ask others not to retaliate;
  - Draw attention to the case.
- Keep a journal or notebook (or ask your Task Person to) of the names and contact information of people you might meet, such as: hospital contacts (doctor, nurse, social worker), EMT Responders, and police.
- Your Task Person may also be helpful in notifying family, friends, and community organizations.
- Take care of yourself during this difficult time and don't be afraid to ask for help. **You don't have to go through this alone.**
- Consider downloading the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute's *Survivor's Burial and Resource Guide* (<http://www.ldbpeaceinstitute.org/content/burial-guide>)

## Important Contact Information

**Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, Headquarters** 617-267-6767 or 800-962-7877 (toll free)

**The Massachusetts Victim's Compensation Fund** 617-727-2200 ext. 2160

[www.mass.gov/ago](http://www.mass.gov/ago)

**Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance (MOVA)** 617-586-1340

[www.mva.state.ma.us/resources](http://www.mva.state.ma.us/resources)

**Center for Homicide Bereavement (CHB)**- 617-792-7830

Provides bilingual/bicultural services free of charge to those who have experienced the loss of a loved one to murder.

**The Children's Room**, Liz Cavano 781-367-5461

Helps grieving children, teens, and families in our communities after the unexpected loss of a loved one.

**Louis D. Brown Peace Institute**, 15 Christopher St, Dorchester, MA 617-825-1917

The Louis D. Brown Peace Institute serves as a center of healing, teaching and learning for families and communities dealing with murder, trauma, grief and loss.

**North Suffolk Mental Health Association**, 301 Broadway, Chelsea, MA 617-889-3300

Provides community based counseling.

**For additional referrals and support, please contact  
MGH's Violence Intervention Advocacy Program (VIAP)**

Kate Haskins, M-F 8:30am- 5pm.

Office: 617-643-4303 Cell: 617-816-9017 (call or text).

VIAP provides on-going support and community referrals to victims of community violence and homicide survivors.