

Homicide How Can You Cope?

There is no single strategy that will help you to cope with the impact of losing your loved one as a result of homicide. However, there are some strategies that may help you survive each day and find ways to cope with your loss.

Support

Support is the key to coping. This support may come from trusted friends and family members, local community, support groups or from a professional counsellor. It is important that you talk about what is happening and how you are feeling with someone you trust. In the early stages, you may need supportive people to offer practical help such as cooking meals, cleaning, telling others about the murder, attending appointments with you, taking children to school, liaising with relevant people (such as police, media, funeral directors) and so on. Support people are those who help you, guided by your needs, who do not take over or leave you feeling helpless. Remember, you can decide about the level and type of support you need.

Later, you may just need someone to listen as you talk about your loved one and help you remember him or her; someone who is there for you when you need them. You may feel like you need to speak to a counsellor about how you are feeling. A support group for people who had a similar experience may be of assistance. Anglicare Loss and Grief Centre (phone 8301 4200) can provide further information about the Homicide Victims Support Group (HVSG) that meets monthly at 184 Port Road, Hindmarsh. The HVSG after hours number is 0449 144 935.

If you would like to know more about other community supports, please contact Victim Support Service on 8231 5626 (country toll free 1800 182 368).

Information

It will be important for you to receive accurate and clear information about the legal process and therefore, you may need to contact a key person to do this. You can approach Victim Contact Officers and detectives involved for information about investigations. Witness Assistance Service and a Prosecutor at the Office of Director of Public Prosecutions can provide information about the legal process. Victim Support Service can provide information about the criminal justice system and assist you in your contact with police, prosecution and any other organisations you have contact with while you are dealing with the impact of homicide. Having relevant information will help you to make informed decisions.

It may also be important to provide other family and friends with information about grief reactions so they can have a better understanding of what they and you are experiencing. This may also assist in responding sensitively to each other's needs and offer appropriate support. You and your family members may find internet based information easily accessible and helpful. The Victim Support Service Resource Centre also has many books, videos and tapes for loan.

This fact sheet has been developed to provide general information to victims of crime. It is not intended as a replacement for medical, therapeutic or legal advice. If you have particular concerns please contact your general practitioner, counsellor or Victim Support Service.

Medication

It may be useful to talk to your GP about what you are experiencing. Sometimes, medication may be helpful to take the edge off strong emotions and help you to cope. In other cases, medication may not be useful as it may only dull your feelings and inhibit you from dealing with them. It is important to talk with your GP about the choices and make an informed decision about taking medication.

Taking Care of Yourself

Be kind to yourself and find time to take care of yourself. This may feel like an impossible task on some days. However, taking time out for you is important.

You could consider the following:

- Having a quiet time alone
- Visiting a peaceful place
- Meditation
- Gentle exercise or yoga
- Gardening
- Listening to music
- Walking or just sitting in the sun
- Reading
- Massage
- Aromatherapy or a long warm bath

Keeping a Diary

Some people find it helpful to write about how they are feeling in a diary or a journal. This may also help you to keep track of how you are feeling over time and to look back at how those feelings and experiences may or may not have changed. If you are going to provide a Victim Impact Statement to the court, a journal may also provide a useful record of how you felt and what you experienced as the court case can be a long-time after the crime.

Further Information

If you would like more information, please contact Victim Support Service on (08) 8231 5626 or view our website at www.victimsa.org

