

What You Can Do If Someone You Know Has Lost a Loved One Through Homicide

Learn what to say and what not to say. Very often, well-meaning friends and neighbors want to help the homicide survivor, but are afraid they will say or do the wrong thing. Remember there is nothing that can be said or done that will bring their loved one back; the process of recovery is a long and slow one. It is very difficult to experience the feelings of helplessness and frustration associated with trying to be a friend to someone who has lost a loved one in such a violent manner. Be aware that everyone will grieve their loss over different periods of time and in different ways. Here are a few ways in which you can help homicide survivors:

- Be a good listener. Let people in grief be where they are at the moment. Don't try to make "psychological" assessments of where they are or where they should be in this process.
- Be non-judgmental. Many homicide survivors express strong feelings of anger and revenge. Do not react with shock if they express these feelings to you; however, while it is normal to have these feelings, it is important that they not *act* on these impulses. Be as appropriate as possible in your response.
- People who are in grief seldom have the energy to reach out and find what resources are available in the community. You might ask survivors if it would be helpful for you to search out and attend support group meetings with them. They might not have the energy to drive or even sit through an entire meeting.
- People in grief seldom have the energy to get through the daily tasks of living, and their ability to concentrate may be very poor at times. Examples of ways one might help would be to pack their children's lunches, help make a grocery list, get extra items at the grocery store, or help put the groceries away.
- If you suspect that a friend is having suicidal thoughts or impulses, ask them. Help them to make and keep an appointment with a professional counselor. If possible, make sure that the therapist is trained in trauma counseling.