

Traumatic Grief and Loss Information Booklet

A guide to resources and information
for emotional recovery



THORNTON/NORTHGLENN VICTIM SERVICES
720-977-5172

*"The same way grief is as unique as our fingerprint, how the stages of
grief will occur in someone's life is also unique"*

Thornton Police Department - 9551 Civic Center Dr., Thornton
720-977-5150

Northglenn Police Department - 50 W. Community Center Dr., Northglenn
303-450-8892

IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Take things one step at a time and make a list and just check things off as they get done. Do not forget to breathe!
- It is okay to check-out several mortuaries before making a decision. Make sure you feel comfortable and respected with the place you choose to help make final arrangements.
- Grieving is very personal and remember the feelings you're experiencing are okay and normal.
- Keep a note pad close by.
- Do not hesitate to ask questions, we are here to help. Write down any questions you might have beforehand to ensure you get all the information you need.
- Allow someone to help coordinate meals for the next few days, allow them to help with any cleaning or other household needs.

Grief is like the ocean; it comes in waves, ebbing and flowing. Sometimes the water is calm, and sometimes it is overwhelming. All we can do is learn to swim.

-Vicki Harrison



Adams County Coroners Office - officeofthecoroner.com	303-659-1027
Burial Assistance - adcogov.org/financial-assistance-programs	303-227-2348
Social Security Office - ssa.gov/denver	800-772-1213
Veterans Administration - va.gov	800-827-1000
Bureau of Vital Statistics (Public Health) - cdphe.state.co.us	303-692-2200
Adams County Probate Division, District Court	303-654-3237

Grief Resources

General Support

Richard Lambert Foundation Family Grief & Healing Center richardlambertfoundation.org	720-408-8417
Heartlight Center - heartlightcenter.org	720-748-9908
Lutheran Hospice	303-425-8000
Mile High Church - Milehighchurch.org	303-237-8851
Grief Support Ministry	303-758-8826

Loss of a Child

Angel Eyes - angeleyes.org	303-320-7771
Parents of Murdered Children - pomc.org	303-748-6395
The Compassionate Friends - compassionatefriends.org	303-281-8452

Widowed Groups

Parents without Partners - parentswithoutpartners.org	303-430-4991
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Groups for Families/Friends of Suicide Deaths

Heartbeat - heartbeatsurvivorsaftersuicide.org	303-770-1859
Parents of Suicides - parentsofsuicide.com	303-322-7450

Groups for those Bereaved by Drunk Driving Crash

MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving) - madd.org/colorado	303-425-5905
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Death of a loved one, expected or not, is difficult for family and friends. Many times there is so much information that one has no idea where to begin. Listed throughout the booklet are some potential concerns to address early on including understanding the uniqueness way people experience and express grief.

Also listed are immediate resources that are available. This booklet is filled with a lot of information, however, you may find that some of it is useful and that some of it does not pertain to your circumstance. Please know this is an attempt to provide you with immediate resources and is not exhaustive of everything that you may be feeling or experiencing. It is the first step to help you through the grief process and to guide you to helpful resources.

IMMEDIATE FIRST CONCERNS MAY INCLUDE:

- Identify someone to be available as a liaison or spokesperson for the family. This can help alleviate a lot of pressure.
- Close family and friends need to be contacted.
- Contact your religious community or clergy if you have one.
- Notify the employer of the deceased.
- Notify your employer if you will be needing time off.
- Make arrangements for child care if needed and/or notify schools or daycare.

IMMEDIATE CONTACTS

• Adams County Burial Assistance adcogov.org/financial-assistance-programs	303-227-2348
• Department of Veterans Affairs va.gov	303-331-7500
• Adams County Coroners Office officeofthecoroner.com	303-659-1027



THE FUNERAL/MEMORIAL/REMEMBRANCE

If there has been a pre-arranged agreement, you will need to locate the paperwork as soon as possible so funeral arrangements can be completed.

Mortuary/Funeral Home A mortuary/funeral home will need to be selected to handle arrangements. It is okay to check-out several before making a decision. Make sure you're comfortable with the place you choose to help make final arrangements. The mortuary staff will work with family on specific arrangements and selections to be made (casket, lining, type of services, etc.) If your loved one has been taken to the Coroner's Office in Brighton, the mortuary will arrange the transport of your loved one.

Cemetery Lot Deeds If a plot has not already been purchased, you may consider this option. The mortuary services you select will be able to assist with the cemetery if you do not have one.

Mortuary Services

Horan and McConaty Funeral Services/Cremation	303-745-4418
Dignity Memorial/Olingers	303-233-4611
Funeraria Latina	303-996-0701
Aspen Mortuaries	303-422-8882
Romero Funeral Home	303-433-3333
All Veterans Funeral and Cremations	800-766-7007
Fort Logan National Cemetery	303-761-0117
All-States Cremation	303-234-0200
DeWitt and Tabler Funeral Directors, LLC	303-452-2525

**This information is provided for informational purposes only.
We do not endorse any of these organizations or companies.**

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Did your loved one have specific clothing he/she would want to be buried in?
- Did your loved one wish to be cremated?
- Was your loved one a Veteran? If so, you may be eligible for veteran's burial allowance, survivor's pension and/or VA insurance. You will need a copy of their discharge papers (DD214).

- **Continue to provide routine.**
 - » Children thrive on routine. If you can keep their schedule as close to normal as possible the better the child will respond to this situation.
- **Encourage the child to express emotion.**
 - » This will help the child develop healthy ways of processing grief.
 - » Never assume children do not know what is going on. Even if the child does not understand death at this stage, he or she recognizes there has been a significant event and things are different now.
- **Help the child retain memories of their loved one.**
 - » This can be done by talking about happy memories, making picture books, etc.
- **Be a role model in how you process grief.**
 - » Find support for yourself if you need it and take time for self-care.

CHILD GRIEF RESOURCE

- **Judi's House** 720-941-0331



HELPING CHILDREN COPE WITH DEATH

The following are suggestions for helping a child grieve.

- **Reassure the child there will always be someone to care for him or her, even if something were to happen to you.**
 - » This is very important because children often may fear losing a parent or other loved one “for no reason” once they have experienced death. This will of course depend on the relationship the child had with the deceased relative or friend.
- **Help the child understand the death of their loved one is not his or her fault.**
 - » Many children especially young children may feel a level of guilt or responsibility for the death of a loved one. Reassure them this is not the case, that nothing they did caused this to happen, and no amount of “if I am good now” or other such statement will change the situation.
 - » Ask the child questions that will help you understand their feelings of guilt or responsibility. This will help you alleviate stress for the child.
- **Give the child clear and honest information.**
 - » Telling a child their loved one went to a better place can be dangerous as it could make the child wonder what is wrong with this place.
 - » Some children, depending on their experience with death may fear “catching death” like catching a cold. They should be reassured this cannot happen.
- **Let the child be as involved as appropriate in the mourning and anniversary rituals.**
 - » This will help the child be prepared for what is going to happen next.
 - » This also allows you to help the child connect with another adult to help both of you through the coming days.
 - » Do not force the child to view their loved one or to visit the cemetery. Let it be their choice.

Annuity Payments

If the deceased was receiving annuity checks, you must notify the company of the death. Do not cash any checks dated after the date of death. Return them to the company. If there is a beneficiary, the check will go to that person as the requirements are completed to certify the death.

Bank Accounts

If accounts are in two names (i.e., Mr. and Mrs.) the survivor will have access. If the account is in the deceased's name only, money cannot be taken from the account until an executor is appointed. An attorney can help establish the executorship: appropriate forms must be drawn up and taken to the bank.

Civil Service Benefits

Those eligible for these benefits should contact the United States Office of Personnel Management, Washington, D.C. or a local branch of that office.

Death Certificates

This request usually takes 10 days to two weeks to process. The mortuary can take care of filing the death certificate for you. Survivors will need ORIGINAL COPIES (not Xerox copies) of the death certificate for social security, insurance companies, banks and other matters that may come up later. It is advisable to order these from the Bureau of Vital Statistics (in the office of Public Health).

Insurance Policies

Insurance policies can be personal, through employers, associations, unions, travel clubs, or school. Also, some credit card holders have automatic insurance covering specific types of death. Contact the appropriate agencies as soon as possible to start the collection process; most will require an original copy of the death certificate.

Mortgages

If mortgage insurance coverage was purchased, the mortgage may be paid off at the time of death. Check your paperwork. The insurance premium is usually paid in the mortgage payment.

Probate is the legal term for administering the estate of someone who has died. There are different processes and procedures for those with or without a will. Administering the estate can involve dealing with property, other assets, and money. Will and probate attorneys can help the executors of the will with their duties, so the wishes of the deceased can be carried out with dignity and without delay.

Social Security

Contact the local Social Security Office to set up an appointment to apply for benefits. When you call ask what papers you will need to bring to the appointment. These may include: the deceased's social security card or number, your card or number, copies of birth certificates, marriage certificates, and the death certificate. You will also need the social security numbers of your children. Children may receive benefits up to the age of 18 or 19 (if in school), Social Security Office 866-613-9904.

Trusts can be set up so that the amount of inheritance tax payable is less.

Wills

If there is a Will it needs to be located as soon as possible. Wills are legal documents that explain what a person wants to happen in the event of their death. This can include care of children and funeral wishes, as well as how they want to divide and distribute their estate. It may be kept at home, in a safety deposit box or at an attorney's office. If there is no Will, you can contact an attorney to determine if the estate must go through probate. You may also contact the Probate Division of District Court for assistance, Adams County Probate Division 303-654-3237.

OTHER IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER

- You may need to contact the landlord or utility company if your loved one lived alone.
- Make arrangements for the care of your loved one's pets.



THINGS TO HELP WITH COPING

There has been a lot of information about feelings and reactions, what to do and what not to do. Here are some suggestions to consider that may be beneficial.

- You are normal and you are having a normal reaction to an abnormal event. Do not label yourself as "crazy".
- Within the first 24-48 hours, periods of strenuous physical exercise alternated with relaxation will alleviate some of the physical reactions.
- Structure your time — keep busy, but keep your life as normal as possible.
- Allow time to experience thoughts and feelings openly to your self and then to others.
- Talk to someone ... sounds simple, but it does help.
- Be cautious not to numb the pain with the use of drugs or alcohol as this can lead to a very destructive path.
- Spend time with others, do not isolate yourself.
- Give yourself permission to feel and express the feelings that you are experiencing. Sharing with others, including support groups, can be very helpful. Acknowledge and accept both positive and negative feelings.
- Do things that make you feel good; jogging, yoga, walking, dancing, crafts, etc. Remember, crying is okay and it provides a physical and emotional release.
- The nutrition almanac recommends supplementing your diet with vitamins C, B2, B6, Calcium and Magnesium.
- Realize that those around you are also under stress if they were also victimized or have experienced a loss.
- If you find it hard to talk to others, write your feelings in a journal.
- Find a bereavement group, there you will find people who have had similar losses or seek professional help if feelings become overwhelming.



THERE ARE ALSO THINGS THAT INFLUENCE GRIEF AND CAN HAVE AN EFFECT ON THE AMOUNT OF TIME THAT YOU GRIEVE.

- The uniqueness of the relationship that you had with your loved one.
- The degree of ambivalence surrounding the relationship or the death.
- Personality and coping behaviors. This means how you have dealt with loss previously and how you express emotions or seek help.
- Social support. Having support from family or friends is very important in the grieving process, and church community, if applicable.
- Health and lifestyle. Health concerns such as depression can impact the grieving process, similarly so can substance abuse.

PHYSICAL, BEHAVIORAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL REACTIONS TO TRAUMA

Everyone experiences and reacts differently to a traumatic event; always remember that whatever YOU are feeling is normal. During the next month or so you may experience many reactions to the kind of experience you have had.

Behavioral Reactions	Psychological Reactions	Physical Reactions
• Hyperactivity • Difficulty Concentrating • Inability to attach importance to anything other than the event • Flashbacks • Not enough activity • Nightmares • Startled reaction • Memory disturbance • Isolating yourself	• Fear • Guilt • Emotional sensitivity • Anger • Anxiety • Depression • Feelings of helplessness • Amnesia of the event	• Fatigue • Insomnia • Exhaustion • Health problems – Changes in appetite – Headaches – Digestive problems

The stages of grief reflect a variety of reactions that may surface as an individual tries to make sense of how a loss affects him or her. An important part of the healing process is allowing oneself to go through and accept all feelings that you may experience. There are traditionally five stages of grief; however, everyone experiences grief in a manner that is unique to him or her, the situation and the relationship that was lost. There is no right or wrong way to grieve, and you may not experience the stages in order, or all of the stages, and you may experience some stages multiple times. These stages are evident in every type of loss.

Denial, Numbness and Shock

Serves to protect the individual from experiencing the intensity of the loss. It may be useful when the grieving person must take action (for example making the funeral arrangements). Numbness is a normal reaction to an immediate loss and should not be confused with “lack of caring”. As an individual slowly acknowledges the impact of the loss; denial and disbelief will diminish.

Anger

This reaction usually occurs when an individual feels helpless and powerless. Anger can stem from a feeling of abandonment through a loved one’s death. An individual may be angry at a higher power, a medical provider, or toward life in general. However, anger may also mask other feelings that an individual may not be ready to express.

Bargaining

May involve persistent thoughts about what could have been done to prevent the loss. People can become preoccupied about the way things could have been better, or different. If this stage is not properly resolved, intense feelings of remorse or guilt may interfere with the healing process.

Depression

May occur in some people after they realize the true extent of the loss. Signs of depression may include sleep and appetite disturbances, a lack of energy and concentration, and crying spells. A person may feel loneliness, emptiness, isolation and self-pity.

Acceptance

In time, an individual may be able to come to terms with various feelings and accept the fact that the loss has occurred. Healing begins once the loss becomes integrated into the individuals set of life experiences.

FEELING AND EXPRESSING GRIEF

Your way of feeling grief and experiencing grief is unique to you and the nature of your loss. You may feel as if you are not the same person you were before the loss. Do not be surprised if you experience conflicting feelings while grieving.

Grieving tends to be unpredictable with sad thoughts and feelings coming and going, like a roller-coaster ride. After the initial days of grieving, you may experience a temporary relief of numbness, sadness and a few days without tears, and then the intense grief may return.

It may take time to adjust to the loss you have experienced. Full awareness of a major loss can happen suddenly or over a few days or weeks. Although some loss may be expected due to long-term illness, it may still take time to fully adjust. Furthermore, traumatic or sudden loss may take longer to adjust. Each person may experience this adjustment at differing times depending on the nature of the relationship, as well as the nature of the loss. The adjustment period will be unique to you and your circumstances.

THERE ARE THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT GRIEF THAT ARE OFTEN MISUNDERSTOOD.

- Grief can last longer and be more painful than most people expect.
- There is no right way or wrong way to grieve, just your way.
- The least helpful thing for grieving people, is when other people telling them how they should do things. Even people who may have previously lost a loved one will not do things the same way you do. That is normal!
- The most helpful thing for grieving people is to be able to process their feelings (talking, writing, composing, creating).
- Grieving doesn't mean forgetting, it means remembering and forming a new relationship with the deceased person.
- Sometimes people we think should help us simply cannot and it's not because they do not want to.



THINGS TO AVOID AND THINGS TO TRY

AVOID

- Excessive alcohol
- Use of legal or illegal substances.
- Withdrawal from family, friends, and coworkers.
- Staying away from work.
- Emotionally shutting down.
- Thinking you are going "crazy."
- Have unrealistic expectations for recovery or acceptance.
- Pretending it does not bother you.
- Blaming yourself or others for the incident.
- Looking for easy ways to explain the incident.
- Minimize the impact this had on you.
- Pushing yourself to "get over it".
- Comparing your feelings or reactions to others.

TRY

- Maintain a good diet and exercise.
- Take time for activities.
- Expect that you will be bothered by unusual feelings that may not be "like" you.
- Spend time with family and friends.
- Remind yourself that post-traumatic effects are completely normal.
- Learn as much as possible about "Critical Incident Stress."
- Get extra help if necessary (your advocate will have a list of suggested therapists or community organizations).
- Take one step at a time; be patient with yourself and others.
- Be aware of how you think — and think about the incident realistically.
- Allow yourself time to recover from the shock.