



Attorney General's Office of Victim Services

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Homicide

Losing a loved one through homicide is one of the most traumatic experiences anyone could face. The trauma may be exacerbated by the intricacies of the criminal justice system. There is no single way to deal with the death of a loved one; however, keep in mind that mourning your loved one is an important part of healing. The stages of grief, though not linear, are common feelings that many victims experience.

- *Shock*: Commonly described as feeling numb, tired, or weak. This should pass and will be replaced by other emotions.
- *Denial & Isolation*: Initially, many victims refuse to face the reality of the situation. This is temporary reaction that buffers the immediate reaction to the loss. Many victims also block out people and things around them, in order to avoid the situation.
- *Anger & Retaliation*: While this anger may not always be aimed at the perpetrator, many victims feel the desire to strike back at the perpetrator. Anger is a normal part of grieving, and you may feel anger for many different reasons. It is important to not keep this anger inside—talk to someone, either a friend or loved one or a professional.
- *Guilt & Bargaining*: Often, many victims think that, if they had only done something differently, their loved one would still be alive. Many victims blame themselves, when the blame does not lie with them.
- *Depression*: Many victims feel sadness and regret as they deal with having to say goodbye to a loved one. It is important to talk to family and friends to relieve some of this sadness.
- *Acceptance*: Not every victim reaches this stage. This is not necessarily happiness or normalcy, rather a period of calm. This is when many victims make their peace with the loss of a loved one.

Coping Strategies

Understand that grieving is a process, and it varies in length of time depending on the victim. Be patient with yourself. There is no single solution for coping with a loss; however, these and other tips may be helpful.

- The basics: eat regularly, get enough sleep, and exercise.
- Some victims find that staying busy (visiting friends, reading, etc.) helps keep their mind off the tragedy.
- Keep a diary: many counselors suggest writing your feelings and thoughts down in order to release them.
- Remember that self-care is very important.
- If, in the time after the loss, you do not feel yourself grieving or improving, it may be a good idea to seek professional assistance.
- Some victims benefit from community-based support groups and talking with others who have similar experiences.

What We Can Do

If your case is being investigated or prosecuted by the Arizona Attorney General's Office, the Office of Victim Services (OVS) may assist you in several ways to cope with the emotional ramifications of your victimization, as well as the complexities of the criminal justice system.

Should your case be investigated and/or prosecuted by the Attorney General's Office, an advocate will be assigned to your case. This advocate can help you in many ways. He or she will keep you updated, by phone or in writing, of the case status, walk you through the criminal justice system, as well as make referrals to outside resources if necessary.

Some victims find it helpful to be actively involved as the case is being investigated or prosecuted. Case updates and notifications from the Office of Victim Services, as well as the advocates themselves, can enable you to participate to the extent you require.

Resources to Help You

Crisis Response Network 24 hour Hotline

1-800-631-1314 (Central AZ)

TTY 1-800-327-9254 (Central AZ)

1-877-756-4090 (Northern AZ)

Homicide Survivors, Inc.

<https://azhomicidesurvivors.org/>

520-207-5012

Parents of Murdered Children

<https://www.pomc.com/>

602-254-8818