

- **Buy yourself a special gift** by spending as much time and effort on yourself as you would on any other “very special person.” The gift to yourself can even have a private secret, very personal meaning.
- **Give flowers** to your church or organization in memory of your loved one. Give flowers to someone that is a shut-in and needs recognition, especially at this time of year.
- **Express honest feelings** by sharing with your family and friends about what you want to do for the holiday season. Expectations should only be what each family member is able to handle comfortably. Tears and honest emotions can be a gift to yourself as an expression of holiday love.
- **Consider changing** the focus of your celebration by changing some of the old traditions. For example opening gifts at a different time, planning the special meal earlier, have the main decorations in a different room or area, etc.
- **Set limitations** as you realize that it isn’t going to be easy. Do the things that are very special or important to you. Be careful of the “shoulds” in any situation that looks especially painful and difficult. Just do the best that you can in any holiday happening.

If you get into the holiday season, or it is over and you still have the holiday blues, it is important to accept that you are feeling blue, sad or tired. Take time and sit down, allow yourself to deal with the feelings. It is not unusual to get emotional or feel like crying. Let the tears cleanse you. If you need help don’t be afraid to ask for it. It will be better to get into contact with people than to withdraw.

Take one day at a time, even an hour at a time if you have to. You may wish to light a special candle in remembrance of the one you lost. There are many ways to tell you how to get through the holidays. Regardless of what well meaning friends and family say to you...do what is right for **you**.

Source: Stepping Stones of Hope

Remember, grieving can produce upsetting responses such as disturbed sleep, diminished appetite, difficulty concentrating, and intrusive thought of the deceased. These responses will likely subside with time. However, if reactions are especially long lasting or troubling, you may need to turn to a professional for assistance.

Benefits of Counseling

Some of the benefits of seeking counseling are:

- Reviewing the incident and processing the event can help victims clarify what actually occurred.
- Discussion of legal and judicial decisions can be discussed and utilized as part of the promotion of healing and resolution.
- The disruption due to trauma can make daily functioning difficult. Counseling can help develop coping skills and strategies, allowing for the continuance of school, work or relationships.
- Establishment of a support network helps to decrease the negative physical, psychological and emotional effects that often result from the traumatic experience.

Survivors can utilize the experience as an opportunity to build and practice assertiveness, confidence, and protective instinct skills.

Who can help?

The Mesa Police Department Victim Services Unit can assist with information regarding Victims’ Rights, Victim Compensation, case status, navigation of the criminal justice system and referrals to other appropriate helping professionals or organizations according to your specific needs.

Resources

Community Information and Referral
(602) 263-8856

EMPACT Crisis Hotline
(480) 784-1500

Victim Services Unit

The Grieving Process



Mesa Police Department
Victim Services Unit
130 N Robson
Mesa, AZ 85201
(480) 644-4075

This brochure provides information for you and your family on the process of grieving.

About the Process

While grief is a normal response to loss, it can produce a number of unexpected feelings and behaviors.

- Each person will grieve in his or her own way. There is no formula for grief. Each person's grieving process is unique. Remember that your experiences of grief are a normal part of the healing process.
- Although grief is an anticipated response to loss, it is important to understand the dynamics of the grieving process. The grieving process moves through a series of "stages". Each stage lasts a different amount of time depending on the individual. It is not uncommon for a person to revisit certain stages as the grieving process continues and individuals do not necessarily move through these stages in the same order as they are outlined in this brochure.
- A sudden or unexpected death can raise some complex issues for the bereaved person, but it is important to know that the grief process can be managed.

Common Reactions

Initially, you may experience emotions such as:

SHOCK: Immediately following the death of a loved one it is difficult to accept this loss. A feeling of unreality occurs as if we are out of touch with what is happening around us.

CONFUSION: During this stage it may be difficult to concentrate or make decisions. Sometimes it may seem to us that even with extreme effort on our part, we just can't think clearly about anything. The effort alone may be exhausting.

DENIAL: In the denial stage we refuse to believe what has happened. We try in our mind to tell ourselves that life is as it was before our loss. We may reenact rituals that we used to go through with our loved one.

ANGER: There may be feelings of unfocused anger. We lash out at anyone or everything, blaming others for our loss. We become easily agitated and experience emotional outbursts. We can even become angry with ourselves. Care must be taken here not to turn this anger inwards. Release of this anger is a far better way to cope with the feelings of grief. It is important to use positive and constructive focus for this energy.

LOWERED SELF ESTEEM: We may feel that we have done something wrong or bad to deserve this kind of pain and loss.

As you move through the grief process, you may experience different emotions such as:

AGONY: When the pain overwhelms us, we begin to think the grief will be with us forever.

GUILT: Feelings of guilt may overtake us as we remember incidences with the deceased such as an unresolved argument or something said that was hurtful. We may also experience guilt over not having expressed feelings of love to the deceased before their death. The best relief for these feelings is to confess them to a trusted friend.

DEPRESSION: Depression is a very likely outcome for all people that grieve for a loss. This is what some consider the most difficult stage of all to deal with. There can be a feeling of listlessness and tiredness. We may burst into tears without explanation, leaving us feeling like there is no purpose to life. It is important to keep in mind that as time passes, these feelings will become less and intense as coping skills are developed.

Finally, you may experience:

GRADUAL OVERCOMING OF GRIEF: As emotional balance returns to our lives, we begin to regain our energy and goals for the future.

ACCEPTANCE: While we are never the same person as before our loss, we eventually reach a place where we can accept living life without the company of the one we lost. Remember, it takes time to get to this point.

What may help?

- Learn exercises that focus on breathing, muscle relaxation or positive imaging may be helpful.
- Participate in physical activities, including any type of cardiovascular exercise and other activities, such as gardening and playing with a pet.
- Eat a balanced diet. Avoid consumption of alcohol or tranquilizers if you can as they will only delay the healing process.
- Do one nice thing for yourself each day. Taking a break and simply putting your feet up.
- Do something nice for someone else. This will help focus your energies on something other than the grief.
- Join a support group, see a counselor or call a friend. Building a support system is very important.
- Keep a journal. This can help you sort out the feelings you are experiencing.
- Rely on your faith. Pray if you find this helps. Spend time with members of your faith community and ask them to support you in prayer as well.
- Take time to enjoy nature. Look at the sunset, walk in the park or plant a garden.

Coping with Holidays

When a significant person is missing during the holiday season for the first time, we are likely to experience a degree of sadness or grief. Deeply sad experiences that have happened during the year, may be recalled during the holiday period. Recollections seem to carry some of the original feelings of unhappiness, sadness or emotional pain that was felt at the beginning of the grieving period. It's normal that expectations can help set us up for an emotional crisis during the holidays. If our expectations are too high on the holiday season, we may end up disappointed and end up with an especially painful case of holiday blues.

To lessen frustration and confusion you might consider some of the following suggestions:

- **Include the deceased** in your conversations with family and friends as you discuss the celebrations of past years. Our loved ones will be here in our hearts and minds.