

## My Child Was Murdered

Most people wrestle with the word murder, the horror, the ultimate violation. This death was preventable. The life of my child was violently and abruptly ended. Someone made the choice to reach into my life and rob me of my child. Murder is a brutal grief and nothing in my life prepared me for this experience.

The loss of a child by murder leads to an overwhelming and traumatic grief that throws families into a life of turmoil. We, the survivors, are victimized, not only by the death of our child, but also by the circumstances of that death.

The dimension of cruelty compounds the sense of sorrow and loss with feelings of anger, distrust and helplessness. The shock at receiving the information of the murder is experienced both mentally and physically.

We, the parents of murdered children must find ways to deal with our grief: find the support, the friends and activities that help ease the pain as we try to rebuild our lives. We need to find ways to channel the emotions of anger, helplessness, and rage. We need to bring awareness to others that by standing and working together we can make this world a much safer place.

Murder grief may demand from you the ability to teach others about your needs while coping with this pain. No matter how deep your sorrow, you are not alone. Others have been there and will help you share your load if you let them. Do not deny them the opportunity.

In many cases, the wounds keep being reopened. There is very little chance to heal or to move on. Life is living in a state of limbo. Your life seems to be controlled by lawyers, courts, judges, and, more often than not, a live criminal blessed with civil rights.

## Challenges Survivors May Encounter

- Isolation, helplessness in a world that is seen as hostile and uncaring, and that frequently blames the victim.
- Feelings of guilt for not having protected the victim.
- The memory of a mutilated body at the morgue - how much did my loved one suffer?
- Getting back the personal belongings of the victim.
- Sensational and/or inaccurate media coverage.
- Lack of information.
- Endless grief.
- Loss of ability to function on the job, at home or in school, etc.
- The strain on family relationships.
- Effects on health, faith and values.
- Effects on other family members, children, friends, co-workers, etc.
- Indifference of the community, including professionals, to the plight of survivors.
- Society's attitude regarding murder as a form of entertainment.
- Financial burden of medical and funeral expenses.
- Medical expenses for stress-related illnesses and professional counselling for surviving family members.
- Financial burden of hiring private investigators.
- Public sympathy for murderers.
- The feeling that the murderer, if found, gets all the help; survivors of homicide victims have few rights.
- Outrage about the leniency of the murderer's sentence.
- Disparities in the judicial system (frequently, punishments for property crimes are as great or greater than the crime of taking a human life).

- Anger over a plea bargain arrangement or agreement.
- Frustration at not being allowed inside the courtroom at the time of the trial.
- Unanswered questions about the crime. What happened?
- Unanswered questions about postponements and continuous delays throughout the trial.
- Bitterness and loss of faith in the criminal justice system.
- After conviction, the long appeals process begins.
- Constantly reliving your story through the dreaded parole process.

*Used with permission of Parents of Murdered Children  
([www.POMC.org](http://www.POMC.org))*

## Other Issues

- Understanding procedures with the criminal justice system and autopsy requirements.
- Expectations of being informed of all critical stages of the criminal case.
- Stress: The violent nature of the death adds to the burden of coping with the legal process, court dates, depositions, and even the media.
- Lack of emotional and practical support from the justice system in seeing the assailant prosecuted, convicted and punished.

*Personal experiences shared by Marg Shand, TCF/SWMB*

## Personal Side Effects

- At times, I felt almost detached from my body, watching myself struggle from a distance.
- Preoccupation with loss.
- Horror about the pain and suffering that my child might have endured.
- A need to know every detail about my child's death.
- Panic attacks and intense emotional outbursts.
- Flashbacks of receiving the notification and horrific images of the faces and reactions of family members.
- Feeling alone, frightened, and knowing that others don't understand what you are going through.
- The roller coaster of emotions caused by the murder are long lasting, sometimes followed by years of devastation as well as a daily struggle to go on.

## Rebuilding

"I knew I couldn't escape the pain. I knew I had to acknowledge it and I knew I had to have a purpose to go on. Members of The Compassionate Friends made that possible. They are the ones that have helped me through the horror and continue to do so. They are very special friends. The only comforting thoughts that I can give to other parents who have had a child murdered is that healing does occur; the process is slow, but it will happen!"

*Marg Shand, mother of Sheldon*



## EULOGY FOR A MURDERED SON

Wise child, sweet son, great friend,  
The world is colder  
Since your life was taken.  
Unbearable the absence of your touch,  
Unspeakable the murder of your life —  
Divorced from every solace is your death.

The only light left to the grieving days -  
Is the awareness you were with us once  
So long ago, or was it yesterday?  
And now we own the gift of memory.  
How much you meant,  
How rich and strong we were  
When we together  
Shared our time on earth.

Unbearable the absence of your touch,  
Unspeakable the murder of your life  
Divorced from every solace is your death  
And yet,  
Wise child, sweet son, great friend,  
The light you left behind  
Will shine forever.

*Sascha Wagner, Wintersun*

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**For support in your area contact:**

### THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF CANADA



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## THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF CANADA

An international peer-support  
organization for bereaved parents  
and their surviving children