



UBHC

UNIVERSITY BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE
Traumatic Loss Coalitions for Youth

Coping After a Sudden Death Strategies for Teens

A sudden death is shocking. When we are shocked we can have many reactions that can affect us physically, emotionally, socially and spiritually. These reactions can at times feel intense and overwhelming. You may have never experienced this kind of thing before, and it can feel scary. Here is information about some of the reactions you may be having that can help you cope while you are going through this difficult time:

- Difficulty in believing what happened-it can seem unreal, or like you are in a dream, or you can even feel numb
- Difficulty thinking straight, remembering things, concentrating
- Changes in appetite – not feeling like eating or eating too much
- Difficulty sleeping – difficulty falling asleep, only sleeping a few hours, fears of being alone at night, bad dreams and nightmares
- Feelings of helplessness, guilt, anger, agitation, anxiety
- Crying a lot or feeling like you can't cry at all
- Feeling like you don't want to be alone at all or feeling like you just want to be left alone all the time
- Diminished interest in things you usually like to do
- Headaches and stomach aches, body aches
- Feeling like nothing makes sense anymore
- Worry that you may always feel this way

All of these reactions, while they can feel overwhelming, are normal after experiencing the sudden death of someone you knew and cared about. If they don't start to lessen after a few weeks, or they seem to be getting worse, it is important to tell a trusted adult who can help. It is really important during this time to not go into a dark corner and try to deal with this alone. It is important to remember there are caring adults that can understand and help you cope. It is important to not numb out by using drugs or alcohol. That can make the healing process longer, make you feel even worse, and can bring on a whole host of other problems.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow said "There is no grief like that grief that does not speak." If you need more help and support during this time, reach out. There are many hands waiting to reach back. If you don't get what you need the first time, keep reaching out until you do. A great resource in NJ is **The Second Floor**, a **24/7 Helpline** for teens and young adults. They can be reached at **888-222-2228**

Speak your grief, support others and let others support you.

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