

## Facing Sudden Loss

The sudden, unexpected loss of a loved one or friend can be an especially difficult experience. Loss in itself is painful, but sudden loss that gives no chance to prepare can feel both painful and intensely shocking.

You may feel cheated of the chance to say the last words you would have liked to say or give one final hug or kiss. Feeling cheated in this way can add weight to your grief, anguish, and despair. Sudden loss can make the world feel shaky or less safe; this is a natural response to any unexpected and traumatic event. You may feel fearful and uncertain, or angry and frustrated.

As a griever, sudden loss may give you three seemingly overwhelming tasks to deal with: the grief over the loss of a loved one; the sudden and unexpected absence of this special person from your daily life; and the changes in your life for which you did not have time to prepare. Each is a big task to take on, and each will become a part of mourning and healing.

It helps to remember that emotional pain isn't constant, and that your intense feelings of grief will not last forever. You will love forever, but you do not need to grieve forever to honor that love.

Keep in mind that it is important to:

**Love yourself and take special care of yourself through the grief.**

**Do your mourning now.** Being strong and brave is important, but never miss an opportunity to cry. That is not self-indulgent, but simply sensible and honest in dealing with your emotions.

**Express your feelings as you heal.** Feelings that are repressed do not go away. So vent your feelings. You may need to say those words you didn't get to say, or find some other tangible way to say goodbye, even if the person you loved is no longer living.

**Get support from other people.** This may include relying on friends, family, a clergy person or seeking support from a professional counselor. Many people who have experienced sudden loss find great help in support groups, with other people who have experienced this type of loss.

You may find them through a hospice, your place of worship, or a community or social service agency. You will not only help yourself, but you may also help another and that can be a great source of strength, joy and recovery. Most of all, trust that the person you loved and lost would want you to remember and honor her or him by living a fulfilling life.

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