

Grief Reactions Common Among Suicide and Homicide Survivors

Sudden deaths, especially those caused by suicide and homicide can leave survivors with some extremely complicated grief reactions. The following lists should not be considered comprehensive.

Grief reactions common among suicide survivors:

- Feelings of rejection and abandonment.
- Feelings of shame, humiliation, and dishonor.
- Lowered self-esteem, shattered self-worth, feelings of inadequacy and failure.
- Emotional withdrawal and acting-out associated with fears of intimacy.
- Intense anger/rage.
- Need to place blame (e.g. doctors or therapists).
- Intense guilt because of perceived preventability.
- Concern for one's own suicidality (fear of genetic transmission of predisposition toward suicide).
- The search for understanding. Not only "why?" but "why did they do this to me?"

Grief reactions common among homicide survivors:

- Feelings of vulnerability, helplessness, and threat.
- Feelings of being out of control.
- The search for understanding.
- The need to determine who is to blame and assign responsibility, and seek punishment.
- Need to regain a sense of personal control and order in the universe.
- Intense feelings of anger, fear, violation, and powerlessness.
- Posttraumatic Stress symptoms such as difficulty falling or staying asleep, irritability or outbursts of anger, difficulty concentrating, hyper vigilance, and an exaggerated startle response.
- Feelings of terror associated with randomness.

Reference: Rando, Therese, Treatment of Complicated Mourning, 1993.