

SUPPORTING SOMEONE AFTER A SUDDEN OR TRAUMATIC LOSS

Compassionate guidance for family, friends, and caregivers

A sudden or traumatic death can overwhelm a person's ability to understand what happened. Shock, numbness, fear, confusion, anger, and disturbing memories may accompany grief. Compassionate support begins with calm, dependable presence. It does not pressure them to recount details or make sense of the loss before they are ready, and helps them feel safer and less alone one moment at a time.

RESPOND TO SHOCK GENTLY

The person may have difficulty concentrating, remembering information, making decisions, or believing the death is real.

- Use simple, calm, and honest language
- Repeat important information without frustration
- Offer one manageable choice at a time
- Do not judge numbness, silence, or changing reactions

LET THEM LEAD THE STORY

They may need to talk about what happened—or may not be able to. Respect both responses and protect their privacy.

- Listen without pressing for painful details
- Avoid graphic questions and speculation
- Do not insist that talking will make them feel better
- Follow their cues and change the subject when asked

HELP RESTORE SAFETY

Traumatic loss can make the world feel unpredictable. Steady routines and practical care can reduce immediate demands.

- Offer food, transportation, errands, or phone calls
- Create a quiet space away from crowds or media
- Help identify trusted people who can stay nearby
- Support sleep, hydration, and basic daily needs

STAY AFTER THE CRISIS

When the funeral is over and others return to normal routines, the reality and trauma of the loss may feel even stronger.

- Check in regularly without requiring a reply
- Remember anniversaries and meaningful dates
- Encourage trauma-informed professional support when needed
- Seek immediate help if you are concerned about safety

A GENTLE REMINDER

You cannot undo what happened, but your calm, patient, and dependable presence can help the grieving person feel safer and less alone as they face what comes next.

You do not need perfect words. Your steady, compassionate presence matters.

