



Type of Death May Affect Grief

People die in different ways, such as after a serious illness, or suddenly from a heart attack or accident, or due to suicide or homicide.

Everyone grieves in their own way, but the cause of someone's death may also impact how you experience grief.

Below are a few examples of how different types of death may impact your grief reaction.

Serious Illness

Serious illnesses, such as cancer, heart disease, and Alzheimer's disease, can result in death. When someone dies after a long illness:

- You may have been prepared for their death because you knew about their illness and you watched their health decline.
- You may have been told they would die from their illness. Even if you thought you were prepared, you may feel shocked after the person dies.
- If you provided care for the person during their illness, you may miss your role as a caregiver and that may also feel like a loss.

People also can die from a short-term illness, like the flu, COVID-19, or pneumonia. When someone dies from this type of illness, it can feel even more shocking. You may have thought the person would get better only to learn they died, even if medical professionals did all they could to keep them alive.

Sudden Death

When someone dies suddenly, for example from a heart attack or an accident, here are some experiences you may have:

- You may feel shocked, surprised, or angry because you had no time to prepare for their death.
- You may also not know or understand how you are feeling.
- You may feel like there were many things that you wanted to do or say in the relationship but now you can't because the person is gone.

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- It may take some time to accept that the person has died.
- You may need to have a friend or family member repeat the news more than once before you believe the person's death happened.

If someone you depended on died suddenly, you may feel anxious or worried because you no longer have that person providing your care and support. You may sense a loss of safety, security, and direction without that support person in your life.

Suicide Death

Suicide means someone killed themselves. Often, we don't know what the person was thinking or feeling that caused them to die by suicide. The reasons for suicide are complex and there is no single cause.

Suicide is a sudden death, so here are some things you may experience:

- You may feel shocked, surprised, or confused about why someone you care about would die this way.
- You may be angry about the suicide.
- You may feel guilty that you didn't know this could happen. These feelings are expected, but it is important to remember that a person's suicide is not your fault or anyone else's fault.

If you have a reason to believe someone you know is thinking about suicide, or if you ever think about suicide, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255). You can also text HOME to 741-741 to be connected to a trained counselor in your area.

Homicide Death

Homicide means that a person was killed by someone else. Sometimes the homicide victim knows the person who killed them. Other times, the person is the victim of an act of violence by someone they did not know. Here some things you may experience after someone's homicide death:

- You may feel shocked, angry, frustrated, or sad.
- You may feel scared or worried that, if someone you know was killed, you could also be hurt or killed, too.

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- You may feel less safe.

Share how you are feeling with someone you trust or a professional and work together to create a plan to keep you feeling as safe as possible.

Sometimes when a person you know dies by homicide, a police officer needs to investigate the situation. If this happens, communicate with someone you trust about you can best handle that situation.

Substance Abuse Death

Sometimes people have a kind of disease called substance use disorder that causes them to become addicted and use too many drugs, or to misuse legal or illegal drugs. The disease often makes the person become addicted to the drugs. An addiction makes it very difficult to stop taking the drugs, even if they want to stop.

When a person with a substance use disorder uses or misuses too many drugs at one time, they can die. When someone you know dies from a substance use disorder, you may feel many emotions at the same time.

Some people with a substance use disorder can get better with professional help. If you knew about their addiction, you may have tried to help them, or you might wish that you could have helped. If you didn't know about their addiction, you may feel sad that you didn't know how sick they were. All these feelings are natural and experienced by many people after a drug overdose death.