



Violent Death

While there is much overlap in sharing news of a sudden death and sharing news of a violent death, it's important to acknowledge that fear and a lost sense of safety can be part of the equation when coping with a violent death. Elements of shock, disbelief, and the need to repeat key information are the same in situations of either a sudden or violent death. However, with a violent death we are tasked with the additional need to provide a reassurance of safety.

- As often as you repeat the news of the death, immediately accompany it with reassurance of physical safety: “Your friend Mark died. He was shot with a gun. But I’m here with you and want you to feel safe. Do you feel safe?”
- Violent death might require interaction with police officers and other community professionals who may or may not be familiar with autism. If possible, appoint a family member or caregiver to be a companion and advocate for your autistic loved one when dealing with these professionals. These caregivers or advocates can act as a buffer and provide support if needed.
- In the days and weeks after a violent death, there may be circumstances that cause fear or bring questions. Flashing police or ambulance lights, sirens, or loud noises may cause anxiety for an autistic adult and/or bring up feelings about the experience all over again, causing rumination or other trauma-related triggers. In these especially challenging moments, reassurance of safety can be helpful to your loved one, as with anyone else. Redirecting them to focus their attention on a special interest or pleasurable activity may also be helpful.