

Living Through Loss Counselling Society of BC

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Effective Actions for Extreme Grief

Use of Death Words:

Use the words *killed, murdered, died*. The actual descriptive words that describe the death help the survivor face the reality of the death. It should not be hidden behind words that cover up the meaning..

Use the Proper Name of the Victim:

Not *the body* or other pronouns (it, him, her, them). The person who died is a *very important person* in the life of the survivor.

Active Listening Skills:

Listen beyond the words. Listen to the words used; the non-verbal messages, and explore the feelings which may not be spoken. Recognize other related losses and issues, such as changes in social relationships, or stigma attached to the form of death.

Preventing Secondary Problems for the Griever:

Help the griever find services to help him/her cope. Be clear and concise. Put instructions and appointments in writing. Don't just provide a list of services.

Explain that not all family members and friends may be able to offer emotional support when it is needed most.

Develop a list of terms and definitions that survivors will frequently hear as the case progresses through the criminal justice system.

Help the griever learn the steps in the criminal justice process that the case will go through.

Open Communication Within the Family:

Encourage family members who are fearful and withdrawn to talk to others in the family and teach them the value of not burying anger and of exposing secrets.