

Is There Anything I Can Do To Help?

Every year there are approximately 16,000 homicides in the country leaving behind double or triple that number of people stunned and grieving over their loss. Those high profile, headline generating cases point to a larger reality. Generally, funerals of murder victims attract large crowds as the broader network of family, friends, colleagues and even strangers come in a powerful show of support. However, once the ceremonies are over, the bereaved often find themselves desperately alone with the painful burden of losing a loved one to murder. Survivors need the continuing support of sensitive people.

Homicide Survivors Program provides survivors with a meaningful support network. People in these groups understand the fears and frustrations; they have been there before. Often, they become as close as their own family and friends. They share with each other during the time of grief and help each other walk on the sorrowing path. Survivors find they are no longer alone. Homicide Survivors is committed to helping families and friends who have lost a loved one to murder. Survivors find help and understanding, meeting with other survivors.

Most grieving people do not need professional help...they need a friend.

Give Sorrow Words. After her fifteen year-old daughter was murdered, Mary shared: "This is the loneliest of all the experiences I have had. Sometimes I note in my friends a too-careful screening of conversation. They seem to think, "The best we can do is to avoid discussing the loss." I do not want to forget my loved one. If they would only think they would realize this. I need and want to talk about my loved one. This is all I can do now. I need to express my grief in words to someone who will listen."

Survivors need and want to talk about their loss, including the most minute details connected to it. Grief shared is grief diminished. Each time a survivor talks about the loss, a layer of pain is shed.

"She cries a lot. I'm concerned she is going to have a nervous breakdown." I mustn't open the wound again. I must help her to forget. They need not worry. I may or may not cry, but the wound is still open, and I shall probably never forget. Tears are healing. Tears are nature's safety valves. Be supportive of crying.

The **simple communication of the feeling of caring** is probably the most important and helpful thing anyone can do. Your support may make a vital difference.

Listen.

Grieving people need to share their pain with another person who will not judge them or give them advice and suggestions. Listening to someone tell their story over and over can often be an invaluable gift to them in helping them sort through their feelings and release their pain.

Please Just Listen

When I ask you to listen to me
and you start giving me advice,
you have not done what I asked.

When I ask you to listen to me
and you begin to tell me why
I shouldn't feel that way,
you are trampling on my feelings.

When I ask you to listen to me
and you feel you have to do something
to solve my problem,
you have failed me,
strange as that may seem.

Listen! All I ask is that you listen.
Don't talk or do - just hear me.

Advice is cheap; 20 cents will get
you both Dear Abby and Billy Graham
in the same newspaper.

And I can do for myself; I am not helpless.
Maybe discouraged and faltering,
but not helpless.

When you do something for me that I can
and need to do for myself,
you contribute to my fear and
inadequacy.

But when you accept as a simple fact
that I feel what I feel,
no matter how irrational,
then I can stop trying to convince
you and get about this business
of understanding what's behind
this irrational feeling.

And when that's clear, the answers are
obvious and I don't need advice.
Irrational feelings make sense when
we understand what's behind them.

Perhaps that's why prayer works, sometimes,
for some people - because God is mute,

and he doesn't give advice or try
to fix things.
God just listens and lets you work
it out for yourself.

So please listen, and just hear me.
And if you want to talk, wait a minute
for your turn - and I will listen to you.

Author Unknown