



---

---

# Sudden Accidental Death

By: Faye Harden

This article will touch on a few of the problems we encounter in traumatic grief experienced from the sudden accidental death of a child: shock, guilt, unfinished business, lack of closure, negative attitudes or obstacles to recover, and anger.

I don't pretend to have any concrete answers for you, but hopefully, a few insights on how to cope with grief. We all grieve differently. What works for one may not work for another.

We don't want to make judgments on which kind of grief is more difficult, but sudden death is recognized as one of the most difficult to recover from because of the tremendous shock involved.

It will be longer, lonelier, and more hazardous to your lasting emotional stability than if you had been able to anticipate the loss and to communicate with your child before death.

One of the large differences between sudden accidental death and death by long-term illness or anticipatory death is the shock involved. It is the primary factor.

This shock affects the body as a major surgery would.

Shock is marked by a lowering of blood pressure, coldness of skin, rapid heartbeat and an acute sense of terror.

Therefore, you may experience immediate physical problems upon learning of the death of your child.

The physical problems we encounter would include excessive tiredness, headaches, stomach problems, and a strange heart activity.

**SPECIAL  
INSERT**

These may come at any time in our bereavement and often come and go.

Emotional or psychological shock is indeed of even larger significance. It

is of unfathomable proportion.

Initially there is alarm because in an instant our whole lives are changed; there is disbelief; the overwhelming reality is more than we can comprehend; we think there must be a mistake.

Often we experience a numbness and later we go through this feeling of numbness again and it may last for weeks or months.

When the numbness wears off we go into our intense grief experience.

There are tears, depression, we relive the events surrounding the death over and over, and usually by this time the family and friends have gone back to their own lives and we are alone with this awful burden of grief.

At this time the highly emotional experience may cause us to think we are mentally unstable; that we are losing our mind.

Just remember that you are not alone – that others of us who have had our children die in this manner have felt the same things, but don't hesitate to seek professional help if you feel you need it or if you appear to be "stuck" in any of the

stages.

With sudden death there is usually a feeling of guilt. It may be self-imposed or real.

We remember punishments that were unresolved, arguments that were not reconciled and there is always the question of could I have prevented it?

We ask ourselves the question "WHY" over and over.

I know now that this question is often unanswerable, but we all ask anyway.

In sudden death we have no chance for closure, no chance to say goodbye.

This adds to the burden as we think of what we could have or should have done.

We are hindered in accepting our child's death by negative attitudes that arise from our questions and our need to place blame.

Learn to be patient with yourself, kind to yourself.

Be realistic, you may have been hurt beyond your wildest dreams.

Allow yourself to express whatever emotions you may feel.

It may not be pleasant for those around you but it is necessary; we must work through our emotions – get them out.

---

---

Continued on other side....

# Sudden Accidental Death



*Continued.....*

There are many forms of denial, learn to recognize them and work through them. People release their emotions in different ways.

Crying is helpful and necessary. Talking is of utmost importance. This is one of the primary functions of Bereaved Parents USA.

We'll listen to one another where our friends are likely to hand us a drink or tranquilizer as they soon grow weary of listening to us, for we need to talk for months and sometimes years about our experience.

Many of our feelings may frighten us, but know that they are normal, natural, and to be expected.

Even thoughts that you are losing your mind is normal. We've all felt that way.

Just remember you are NOT losing your mind. It only feels that way.

The circumstances of sudden death cause loneliness. Few people can identify with us because our circumstances are practically unique. This uniqueness isolates us.

Another of our severe problems is often anger, which might be better described as range.

It can be focused anger, focused on individuals who were responsible for the death of our child.

Medical personnel who we feel did not do the right things to save our child, at God for letting this happen to our child, even anger at people around us whose lives are happy and whose children are healthy now that ours are not.

You may feel anger at your child for dying and leaving you with such a burden of grief.

Anger is normal. It is a natural emotional reaction turned inward.

*Depression* can lead to thoughts of suicide. Get help if it lasts too long.

Anger gives us tremendous energy and

*Crying is helpful and necessary.  
Talking is of utmost importance. This  
is one of the primary functions of  
Bereaved Parents USA.*

that energy can be used.

It can be focused on healthy outlets, such as a social action.

We can take up a cause, work for stricter law enforcement against drunk drivers or gun control issues, for instance.

Use that energy positively. It will give you a sense of accomplishment and renewed self-esteem.

Bereaved parents are in grave danger of drug and alcohol abuse, for these are tools which temporarily give relief usually.

Drugs and alcohol are merely means of putting off the grief process.

Grief work will have to be done eventually and our literature tells us it is worse when put off or delayed.

With the death of a child, we as parents experience the ultimate failure.

We are supposed to be invincible where our children are concerned and now we

have failed to keep our child alive!

Suddenly our entire belief system is shattered.

The suddenness of the death has robbed us of our confidence in ourselves. We have low self-esteem.

We suffer from lack of motivation due to our severe fatigue.

We have nothing left to believe in, not even God for some.

We are totally insecure.

We are placed in the position of continuing to deteriorate or to begin to rebuild our lives by rebuilding our beliefs, our self confidence and our self-esteem.

The choice is yours. Choose to live. Your child would want you to not only just live but continue to grow and love.

*Choose to live.  
Your child would  
want you to not  
only just live but  
continue to grow  
and love.*

