





## Signs of Grief

Emotional Signs	Behavioral Signs
sadness    helplessness relief      loneliness guilt       yearning anxiety    shock anger       freedom fatigue     numbness	social withdrawal crying and sighing searching and calling out absentmindedness sleep and appetite disturbance avoiding reminders of the deceased dreaming of the deceased carrying objects belonging to the deceased wearing clothes belonging to the deceased
Cognitive Signs	Physical Signs
disbelief confusion preoccupation hallucinations denial a sense of presence of the deceased	hollow stomach tightness of chest dry mouth breathlessness lack of energy feeling of panic muscle weakness depersonalization over-sensitivity to noise



## Signs That a Survivor May Need Additional Help

- many months after the death, grief is more intense
- recurring recollections of the death that disrupts daily activities
- nightmares
- flashbacks
- avoidance of any thoughts or feelings regarding the death
- preoccupation with the death
- over-idealization of the deceased and of your relationship
- poor memory
- significant decrease in normal activities
- depression, sadness, loneliness, and hopelessness
- withdrawal from other people
- “survivor guilt” and self-destructive behavior
- inability to experience emotions or feel love for others
- avoidance of close relationships for fear of being left again
- feeling overwhelmed by emotions
- feeling that there is no future
- problems with drug or alcohol abuse
- irritability or outbursts of anger
- difficulty in concentrating on your work, interfering with performance
- inability to relax
- being easily startled
- continued physical symptoms whenever you are reminded of the death

Fitzgerald, Helen. *The Mourning Handbook*. Simon and Shuster, 1994



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## Issues Related to Sudden Death

1. Leaves survivors with a sense of unreality
2. Increases feelings of guilt; "If only I had..."
3. Intensifies the need to blame
4. Involves legal and medical authorities
5. Causes survivors to feel helpless
6. Leaves unfinished business
7. Involves an increased need to understand



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## Helping the Family: At the Hospital or the Morgue

- Have a member of the department drive the family to the hospital or morgue and stay for as long as necessary
- Work with the hospital staff to secure a private room where the family can gather. This should be separate from the general waiting area, if possible.
- Assist the family in dealing with hospital staff.
- Work with the family to arrange a plan for dealing with the media. The family may wish to have a member of the department speak for them.
- In cases of extended hospitalization, offer to assist with day-to-day tasks such as home maintenance, arranging childcare, or bringing meals and other necessities to the family.
- If the firefighter is taken to a specialized hospital out of the local area, assist with this process. Consider asking another department close to that hospital to assist you in supporting the family while the firefighter remains hospitalized. This is not solely a function of the department of firefighters. Church members, friends, or other family members may desire to help or assist.
- Encourage the family to spend time with the firefighter, even if he has already died. It is very important to many family members to see the loved one's body.
- If the firefighter's body is badly burned or disfigured, help prepare the family members for what they will see. Always allow family members to make the decision whether or not to view the body.
- Have someone available to drive the family home from the hospital after the death. Offer to stay with the family at the house or arrange for someone to stay at the house or with the family.



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## Helping the Family: From Time of Death Through the Funeral

- Contact the Department of Justice to notify them of the death. This will begin the process of reviewing eligibility for the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program.
- Contact the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation to notify them of the death. This will assure the beginning of emotional support for both the family and the department.
- Work with the family in planning the funeral. Remember that the family's wishes always come first. If they want a private funeral, the department can still hold a memorial service if the family will allow.
- If there are children in the family, consider creating a special role for them, such as riding on the fire truck in the funeral procession. (Be sure to ask the parent before this idea is presented to the children!)
- Offer to assist with lodging or transportation for out of town relatives and friends.
- Offer to have a member of the department stay with the family prior to the funeral. In smaller department, consider rotating people as needed in order to maintain a department presence with the family. Church members, friends, other family members may desire to help or assist.
- Have someone available for tasks such as answering the phone, driving the family to the funeral home to make arrangements, or running to the grocery store.
- Help coordinate household duties such as food preparation, cleaning, and childcare.
- If donations are collected for the family, set up a bank account to deposit these funds at a location approved by the family.
- Coordinate with local law enforcement officials to make routine checks of residence/neighborhood.



## Helping the Family: Ongoing Support

- Follow through with all steps necessary to secure benefits for the family. The process is often lengthy, so keep the family updated about this.
- Continue to invite the family to department events.
- Remember that some events, such as holidays and the anniversary of the date of death, may be especially difficult for the family. Even families who seem to be doing well may need extra support and contact during these times.
- Continue to talk with the family about your memories of the firefighter. Most families want to hear their loved one's name and hear what others remember about him or her, even if it is emotionally difficult.
- Consider creating some kind of tribute to the fallen firefighter to present to the family. This could be a local memorial, a video tribute, a scrapbook, or a scholarship in the firefighter's name. Prepare a tribute that is fitting for your firefighter.
- Provide information on the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation's Survivor Support Network (301) 447-1365.



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## Line-of-Duty Death Resources for Fire Departments

The Foundation has compiled the following list of resources based upon recommendations from department and grief specialists. We will continue to add resources to this list, which also appears on our Web site, [www.firehero.org](http://www.firehero.org).

### Publications

- ***National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, Taking Care of Our Own: A Fire Chief's Guide to Preparing for a Line-of-Duty Death;***  
Contact: 16825 South Seton Avenue, Emmitsburg, MD 21727; (301) 447-1365
- ***Chaplain's Manual: Fire Department Funerals and Serving Those Who Serve: Beginning a Fire Department Chaplaincy Program;***  
Federation of Fire Chaplains, 1994  
Contact: Federation of Fire Chaplains, Route 1, Box 155B, Clifton, TX 76634; (254) 622-8514
- ***Critical Incident Family Support Journal;*** Seminole County, Florida  
EMS Academy Foundation  
Contact: P.O. Box 951562, Lake Mary, FL 32795-1562; (407) 323-2500
- ***Final Farewell to a Fallen Firefighter: A Basic Fire Department Funeral Protocol;*** *Fire Engineering* magazine, 1993  
Contact: *Fire Engineering* magazine at [www.fire-eng.com](http://www.fire-eng.com)
- ***For Those Who Gave So Much: Planning, Preparation, and Officiation of Funerals and Memorial Services for Public Safety Officers;*** Dwaine Booth, 1993  
Contact: Booth/Taylor Publishing at [www.homel.gte.net/dbooth/order/htm](http://www.homel.gte.net/dbooth/order/htm)
- ***Guide for Investigation of a Line-of-Duty Death;*** International Association of Fire Chiefs  
Contact: IAFC at [www.ichiefs.org/publications](http://www.ichiefs.org/publications).
- ***A Guide to Help the Fire Service Prepare for Line-of-Duty Death;*** Paul J. Antonellis  
Contact: Order online at [www.fire-police-ems.com/books/bg9500.htm](http://www.fire-police-ems.com/books/bg9500.htm)
- ***An Honorable Farewell;*** Warren L. James, *Fire Chief* magazine, October 1998  
Contact: *Fire Chief* magazine at [www.firechief.com/bodyhome/htm](http://www.firechief.com/bodyhome/htm)



- ***Line-of-Duty Deaths and Their Effects on Co-Workers and Their Families***; Richard Gist and Vickie Harris Taylor, 1991
- ***A Procedural Guide in the Event of Death in the Line of Duty of a Member of the Volunteer Fire Service***; National Volunteer Fire Council; 1989  
Contact: NVFC at [www.nvfc.org](http://www.nvfc.org)
- ***Funeral Procedures for Firefighters: A Resource Manual***; National Volunteer Fire Council; 1992  
Contact: NVFC at [www.nvfc.org/funeral.htm](http://www.nvfc.org/funeral.htm)
- ***Support Services to Surviving Families of Line-of-Duty Death: A Public Safety Agency Handbook***; Concerns of Police Survivors; 1990  
Contact: Concerns of Police Survivors at [www.nationalcops.org/forms/htm](http://www.nationalcops.org/forms/htm)

## Web Sites

*Firehouse* magazine

[www.firehouse.com](http://www.firehouse.com)

Provides immediate information on incidents and hosts a forum on Line-of-Duty Death issues.

*United States Fire Administration*

[www.usfa.fema.gov](http://www.usfa.fema.gov)

Provides listing of firefighter deaths. Current year listings only reflect information USFA has received and do not necessarily reflect line-of-duty deaths that will meet criteria for inclusion on the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial.



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## **National Grief Support Groups**

Following is a list of resources that your fallen firefighter's family may find helpful.

### **General Sites**

#### **Grief and Healing Discussion Page**

A grief-related site with a message board providing opportunities to give and receive help with other grieving people. Especially good resources for grieving men.

[www.webhealing.com](http://www.webhealing.com)

#### **Journey of Hearts: A Healing Place in Cyberspace**

Provides resources and support for the unique issues of both new and long-term grief.

[www.journeyofhearts.org/](http://www.journeyofhearts.org/)

#### **MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving)**

Information regarding victims rights and advocacy. Provides support groups.

511 East John Carpenter Freeway, Suite 100

Irving, TX 75062

(800) 438-MADD

[www.madd.org](http://www.madd.org)

#### **Growth House Family Links**

Excellent links to other family grief-related sites.

[www.growthhouse.org/famgrief.html](http://www.growthhouse.org/famgrief.html)

## **Finding Support Services**

#### **American Association of Pastoral Counselors**

Clergy who have been trained and are experienced in helping people work through loss.

9504A Lee Highway

Fairfax, VA 22031-2302

(703) 385-6967

[www.aapc.org](http://www.aapc.org)



**Angels of Valor from Grief Recovery Online**

Chat room specifically for family members of those killed in the line of duty, including fire fighting, law enforcement, and military; the facilitators of this site are also survivors.

[www.groww.com](http://www.groww.com)

**Griefnet**

An extremely comprehensive site that has good sources for literature as well as many specialized support groups, memorials and chat rooms.

[www.rivendell.org](http://www.rivendell.org)

**National Hospice Organization**

Nationwide and local hospice referrals, includes a state-by-state listing of hospices

(800) 658-8898

[www.nho.org](http://www.nho.org)

**AARP Grief Program**

State-by-state listing of support groups for widows and widowers.

[www.aarp.org/statepages/](http://www.aarp.org/statepages/)

**Bereavement & Hospice Support Netline**

State-by-state listing of support groups.

[www.ubalt.edu/www/bereavement/states.htm](http://www.ubalt.edu/www/bereavement/states.htm)

**Online Memorials**

**Emergency Services Memorial Sites**

Links to online memorial sites.

[www.firefighting.com/911/911mem/esmem1e/htm](http://www.firefighting.com/911/911mem/esmem1e/htm)

**Firefighter Home Page Memorial**

Provides links to memorial sites.

[www.idcnet.com/~ffhp/mem.html](http://www.idcnet.com/~ffhp/mem.html)

**Memorial Hall**

Offers space to post memorials to fallen firefighters.

Links to fire, police, and EMS memorial sites on the web.

[www.parlorcity.com/trump/mem2.htm](http://www.parlorcity.com/trump/mem2.htm)



**National Fallen Firefighters Foundation Memory Wall**

Site for families and friends of fallen firefighters to post tributes.  
[www.firehero.org/memory.htm](http://www.firehero.org/memory.htm)

**The Virtual Memorial Garden**

Bulletin board for posting memorials to loved ones.  
[www.catless.ncl.ac.uk/vmg](http://www.catless.ncl.ac.uk/vmg)

**Virtual Memorials**

Site which provides space for and assistance with developing memorial pages for loved ones, including photographs and graphics.  
[www.virtual-memorials.com](http://www.virtual-memorials.com)

**For Widowed Spouses**

**Widowed Persons Service**

Referral information, a public education program for family adjustment, counseling for financial and legal affairs. Survivor to survivor support offered.  
AARP  
601 E Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20049  
(202) 434-2260  
[www.seniors-site.com/widow/wps.html](http://www.seniors-site.com/widow/wps.html)

**WidowNet**

Site by and for widows and widowers. Focus on self-help and helping one another.  
[www.fortnet.org/WidowNet/index.html](http://www.fortnet.org/WidowNet/index.html)

**AARP Grief Programs**

State-by-state listings of support groups for widows and widowers.  
[www.aarp.org/statepages/](http://www.aarp.org/statepages/)



## **For Parents**

### **Compassionate Friends**

An international support group for bereaved parents and siblings. Provides support, referral and information.

P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696

(630) 990-0246

[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

### **Parents of Murdered Children (POMC)**

100 East Eighth, Room B-41

Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

[www.pomc.com](http://www.pomc.com)

### **Penparents: The International Support Network for Grieving Parents**

Provides peer support, pen pal network with other grieving parents, as well as matches with parents in similar circumstances.

[www.penparents.org](http://www.penparents.org)

### **Invincible Summer**

Site for grieving parents who have no surviving children.

[www.drizzle.com/~hall/invsum](http://www.drizzle.com/~hall/invsum)

## **For Teens and Kids**

### **A Child's Heart**

Site only for children and teens.

[www.death-dying.com/child/](http://www.death-dying.com/child/)

### **The Dougy Center**

The Dougy Center provides bereavement services to children and teens in the Portland, Ore. area. Lists Network Programs across the country for grieving children and teens.

[www.dougy.org/Groups.htm](http://www.dougy.org/Groups.htm)

### **Julie's Place**

Site for young people ages 6-18 who have lost a sibling. Includes separate sections for children (ages 6 -12), teens (ages 13-18), and parents.

[www.juliesplace.com/](http://www.juliesplace.com/)



**Kidsaid**

Site for children and teens. Includes opportunities to post stories, questions, artwork, and a message board. Sponsored by GriefNet.  
[www.griefnet.org/KIDSAID/welcome.html](http://www.griefnet.org/KIDSAID/welcome.html)