

**CAMROSE POLICE SERVICE**  
**TRAUMA AND CRIME SUPPORT SERVICES**

**780-672-4570**

**SUDDEN DEATH INFORMATION PACKAGE**

**After a Death**

A Sudden Death, whatever the cause, expected or unexpected can create a lot of emotional and family upheaval. Dealing with the aftermath of the death can be confusing and overwhelming as there are many tasks to be completed while you are grieving.

Unexpected death

Unexpected death is a shock to the emotional and mental wellbeing to those left behind. The person may have been young, healthy or older but still the suddenness of the event can lead to issues not faced by you in the past.

An unexpected sudden death will cause grief reactions that may be more intense and longer lasting than those when you expected someone to die. Therefore, you have to be alert to signs that you are not dealing with the death in a healthy manner. Seek help if you find yourself:

Intense longing and yearning for the deceased one

Intrusive thoughts of the deceased person

Denial of the death or imagining the person is still alive

Avoiding reminders or day-to-day tasks that remind you of the deceased person

Extreme anger or bitterness

You feel like life is no longer worth it or meaningless and have thoughts of suicide or preoccupation with death

Inability to function at home, work, or school

Withdrawal from daily activities, friends, family

**First Steps**

Upon hearing about the death, you may be on an emotional roller coaster-grief, angry, disbelief or guilt. These are normal reactions to the situation. You may feel you not able to take the next steps in dealing with what has happened.

There are some important first steps for you to take:

## Tell Close Family and Friends About the Death

This can be very difficult to make a call to tell a family member or friend about the death. But in telling others you start to build a support group of other people grieving the loss. Keep the message simple. At this time, you may or may not know the cause of death. It is okay to say “I just can’t talk about it yet.”

It’s okay to be sad and show your grief. Don’t feel you have to be strong for everyone. It is okay to cry, to rant, to grieve publicly. Also, respect others feelings and reassure them it is okay to express their emotions too.

If the death is caused by homicide or suicide, be honest when talking to others. It is not shameful or wrong to tell people that the person died from these causes.

Telling children and teens that the person has died. You do not have to give details but children do know when they are being lied to about what is going on. Also, they will need to grieve the loss too if the person was part of their lives.

## Telling Others

You will also have to tell others about the death. For some of these contacts, you will need Proof of Death Documentation.

- |                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bank     | <input type="checkbox"/> Lawyer                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employer | <input type="checkbox"/> Insurance Company     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School   | <input type="checkbox"/> Doctor, dentist, etc. |

## Proof of Death

You will need two documents to move forward with the settling the estate:

**Certificate of Death** which is the official government document and is accepted by most organizations (banks, government, utility companies) as proof of death.

**Certificate of the Medical Examiner** issued by ME upon written consent of the next of kin. This form is required by most insurance companies for life insurance.

An unexpected death requires the involvement of the EMS, Police, and Medical Examiner (ME) to determine the cause of death.

The police may secure the scene, which is considered a crime scene until the investigation is complete. This is not an indication the police think you are necessarily involved in the death but a precaution in case there was foul play. The police will collect identification, and possibly

other items they feel are related to the investigation. They also may take photographs. The investigating member will then ask for a statement if the body was found by someone.

If the death was the result of an accident, homicide, or suicide, the police will inform the next of kin of the death and cause.

The body may be transported to the nearest Medical Examiner's Office which in this area will be in Edmonton. The ME will determine if an autopsy is needed. In some cases, such as suicide or homicide, only the Medical Examiner can issue the death certificate.

Consent of next of kin is not required for an ME's autopsy to be done.

Notify the ME office if there are any cultural issues around having an autopsy completed.

You can request a copy of the report.

### **Medical Examiner's Office 780-427-4987**

The ME's exam can range from a paper-based file review of medical records to a full autopsy. Most bodies are examined within 24 hours of arrival at the office. The ME's office attempts to release the body as soon as possible to the family for burial.

The final report will determine:

Date and place of death

Medical reason for the death

Manner of death

Identity of deceased

Be aware that toxicology and tissue investigations may take a period of time before the results are known, delaying a certain cause of death in some cases.

### **Other Legal and Financial Matters**

After you receive the Proof of Death Documents, there are a number of other agencies that have to be contacted to finalize the person's financial and legal obligations.

Government of Canada –Passport 1-800-567-6868

Social Insurance Number 1-800-206-7218

Service Canada 1-800-277-9914

Veterans Benefits 1-866-522-2122

Who to notify and eligibility for benefits - Canada.ca

Government of Alberta

Alberta Registry – cancel driver’s license and license plates

Alberta Health Care Card 310-000 then 780-742-1432

Credit Card Company

Bank

Safety Deposit Box (bank)

Canada Savings Bonds 1-800-575-5151

### **Benefits to Apply For**

Life Insurance Policies

Allowances for Survivors 1-800-277-9914

Veteran’s Benefits 1-800-522-2122

CPP Death Benefit 1-800-277-9914

### **FUNERAL HOMES**

Funeral

representative, usually the named Executor, will take lead

on funeral arrangements. Funeral directors will guide you in making the arrangements. Funeral Homes also often have resources for support while grieving.

#### **Funeral Homes in this Area**

##### **Camrose**

Burger’s Funeral Home 780-672-2121

weber’s Funeral Home 780-672-3131

##### **Wetaskiwin**

Wetaskiwin Funeral Home 780-352-5252

Serenity Funeral Home 780-352-5300

Baker’s Funeral Chapel 780-352-2501

Bashaw

Bashaw Funeral Home 780-372-2353

**Killam**

Fee and Sons 780-385-3642

## Grief



### What is Grief?

Grief is a normal reaction to a loss. It is a strong, sometimes overwhelming emotional suffering lasting days, weeks, or even years. Even though we often associate grief with a death, a person can grieve loss of a job, a relationship, a piece of property, or your health.

But grief should also be a healing, transforming process in which we develop a new normal without the object or person we lost.

This booklet will deal primarily with the loss through death, but the concepts can be applied to any loss.

### Stage of Grief

**Shock** – you are numb and feel removed from the news. It feels impossible something like this could happen.

**Denial** – you are unable to believe the death occurred, or feel a mistake was made.

**Anger** – can be directed at the person who died, the person who was involved (if a crime or accident) or the person who brings the news. It is an outpouring of emotion your mind expresses as anger.

**Bargaining** – you look for a way to change what happened. You try to make deals in your mind in order to reverse what has happened.

**Depression** – our mind goes into a dark place, and sadness can overwhelm us. We are realizing the person is gone and we are facing a new normal.

**Testing** – we start seeking solutions to our new normal.

**Acceptance** – we start to move forward without the person.

## **The Grieving Process**

“There is not a typical response to loss, as there is no typical loss. Our grieving is as individual as our lives.” *Kubler-Ross*

Grief, although universal, is experienced by each person in a unique way which depends on the person’s previous experience with grief, coping skills, faith, and the type of loss. No one should be judged about their grief experience.

Grief comes in many forms and is as unique to a person as fingerprints. It is also unique to different faiths and cultures. Accept your grief in whatever forms it takes and find people or support you as you are in your grief not as they want you to be.

Crying is seen as the universal sign of grief. Accept your tears if you cry. But if you don’t cry, it does not mean you don’t grieve. Each person expresses their grief in a personal way. If you are not crying because you are putting on a brave front, remember this can make it hard for you and others to grieve in a health way.

You may also experience sighing, headaches, loss of appetite, difficulty sleeping, feeling heavy, chest pain, anxiety, anger or guilt. Loss can also have you questioning your own mortality and meaning of life and death (this is especially true with unexpected death or death of a young person.)

Remember grieving is not a linear process from step-to-step. You will find you change from moment to moment where you are at in the stages of grief. You may find you skip or never experience some steps at all. Thoughts and feelings will come and go. Be patient with yourself.

### **Working through your Grief Ideas not Rules**

1. Give yourself permission to grieve. Acknowledge the loss and how it will affect your life going forward. Give yourself mental, emotional, and physical space to do what you need to do.
2. Do diligent self-care. Make sure you are eating, sleeping, getting some exercise, and taking what steps you need to be healthy.
3. Find a support system – people are not designed to work in isolation. Asking for help can be an act of courage not a weakness. Find a person or group that accepts where you are at with your grief and how you grieve. Find a support group that have experienced the same type of loss.
4. Write it down. Journal, draw, paint. Express your feelings for the deceased person and how you feel about their loss.

5. Meditation can help calm your mind and center you in the present. If you need help there are many guided meditation apps and videos available to teach you the proper techniques.
6. Sleep. Use guided relaxation techniques, use a white noise machine, or ask your doctor for a sleep aid. It is important to sleep to keep your mind sharp and healthy to work through your grief. Using alcohol to sleep will decrease the quality of your sleep.
7. Acts of Kindness – giving back to your family and community can create a sense of meaning in your life when you are feeling at a loss. Donating in the name of the deceased person can create a permanent reminder.
8. Yoga – yoga creates connections between the mind and body. With grieving you may feel you do not have time to just “feel.” With yoga you can learn tools to support your space to grieve. “Yoga teaches us to cure what needs not be endured; and to endure what cannot be cured.” *BKS Iyengar*
9. Create rituals – rituals help us manage the chaos and create structure. The only socially recognized ritual in our culture for death is the funeral. But personal Rituals of Remembrance can help us understand our feelings and give our grief a safe space to exist. This can be especially true around holidays, anniversaries, and birthdays. Create a memory book to look at, light a candle at special occasions to honor the person, plant a tree or garden. Ensure the ritual has a clear beginning and end.
10. “Normal is someone you don’t know very well.” *Anonymous*. Grief can change many things in our lives and selves such as our energy and thinking patterns. But we need to understand our experience is going to be ours alone. There is no “normal” grief. So, if people are telling you to “get over it” or “move on” understand you do not have to follow their path. Don’t let anyone tell you how to feel and don’t tell yourself how you “should” be feeling. Give your permission to be angry, cry, laugh, or be sad. But remember, grief should not be a permanent state of mind and should abate with time.
11. Forgive yourself and others including the person who died or anyone involved in their death (crime, suicide, or accident). Let go and accept humans make mistakes and choices that are not always in our control. Anger and distrust do not honor the deceased’s life or your own.
12. Just stop and breath. Grief can make us feel short of breath. Sometimes just stop and take a deep breath.

13. Be grateful every day for something even if its coffee in the morning. Be grateful for having had the person in your life. Honor that place in your life.
14. Plan around difficult places and times. If you know you could face a trigger for your grief, plan ahead to how you are going to handle those triggers. How can you leave if you have to, can you honor the person at the event, do you need a support person with you (i.e. Court), or can you pre-plan to remove a trigger? Understand that emotions around the loss can arise at any time and overwhelm you. Thinking ahead of managing these times can help remove some of the anxiety around facing these events.
15. Give yourself permission to move forward with your life without the deceased person. Sometimes you feel guilty about moving on and making changes in your life. But it is natural and normal for grief to abate. Give yourself permission to laugh, to meet new people, to have fun without that person, and to do things you enjoy.

“The grief journey is all about learning to move forward by carrying the memory of your loved one in your heart.” *Anne Moss*



## **When is Grief more than Normal Grief**

There may come a time when you realize your grief is more than you can handle on your own. You may need help to overcome “complicated grief”.

### **When is it more than grief?**

You have persistent and painful re-experiencing of the event through dreams (nightmares) or flashbacks.

You have a persistent intense longing for the person who died.

You have intense loneliness.

You avoid anything or anyone which reminds you of the person who died. This may start to interfere with your ability to carry on with your day-to-day activities like work or family.

Emotions swing back and forth. You are easily angered, startled, or crying.



You feel anxiety and like you are losing control of your emotions. You may even experience panic attacks or intense fear.

Depression where you feel hopeless and helpless. You may find yourself not eating, sleeping more than normal or not at all, life is becoming dull and dark.

You have thoughts of harming yourself and others.

**If you experience any of these you should seek help.**



## **Resources**

Camrose Police Service – Trauma and Crime Support Services

780-672-4570

Camrose Hospice Society

780-608-0636

Canadian Mental Health Association

780-672-2570

Primary Care Network

780-608-4927

Mental Health Helpline

1-877-303-2642