

This booklet is provided for your use by the Victim Services Department at the Mesa County Sheriff's Office.

During this difficult time, you may find that you have trouble remembering things that might be important later. You may wish to use this booklet to record arrangements to be made, phone numbers and addresses people give you, names of visitors, gifts and cards received, or simply to record your own thoughts.

If you feel that we may be able to assist you by providing referrals, information, or support, please do not hesitate to contact us at 244-3275.

We wish you well.

Sheriff Todd Rowell



Planning guide for Survivors  
of an unexpected death

Provided courtesy of:  
Mesa County Sheriff's Office  
Victim Assistance Program





## DEALING WITH AN UNEXPECTED DEATH

You have just experienced the unexpected death of someone who has been an important part of your life.

At first you may experience a time of shock and disbelief. There may also be a period of confusion and inability to focus or make decisions, which makes it difficult to take care of legal, financial and memorial needs. It is advisable to find a trusted family member or friend who can accompany you during this time.

During the grieving process, common reactions may be:

- Shock & disbelief
- Disorientation/detachment
- Confusion/difficulty speaking
- Difficulty focusing and making decisions
- Anger/feeling a need to release energy (violence)
- A desire to run or escape the situation
- Shortness of breath/a feeling of suffocation
- Stomach ache/a feeling of nausea
- Headache/a feeling of dizziness
- Fatigue/muscle weakness
- Intense emotional release (crying, shouting, stomping)

All losses are very distinct and are likely to affect survivors in different ways. It is important to let yourself grieve in your own individual way and time. And it is important for you to take care of yourself. Here are some things that may help:

- Find someone you trust to be with you.
- Allow reactions to surface; denying them or trying to suppress them makes them worse.
- Step away for a short period, if you can, and try to re-establish a sense of routine.
- Take several intentional, deep breaths several times a day. Oxygen is very important for clear thinking, pain control, digestion, immunity, etc.
- Drink plenty of water and try to eat a balanced diet.
- Try to get enough sleep or at least plenty of rest.
- Physical activity may help relieve tension and stress.
- Do what comforts, sustains and recharges you. Be gentle with yourself. Take things one step at a time.

## Grief Counselors

Scott Aber – 518 28 Rd, Ste B101, GJ 712-0249

Caroline Dohm - 951 Main St, GJ 241-1913

Ms. Alyn Brandi Dressler, MA, LPC, LAC - 518 28 Road, Ste B101 270-4108

Linda Feuerborn, Awakenings - 518 28 Rd, Ste B200, GJ 433-9423

HopeWest, Individual Counseling - 3090 N. 12th St., GJ 241-2212

Dr. Katrina Katen, Individual Matters, LLC - 420 N. 8th St., GJ 628-5589

MindSprings (Colorado West Mental Health) - 245-3270

### Grief Counselors that provide trauma release

Vicky Coniff - 3090 N. 12<sup>th</sup> St. Ave, GJ 241-2212

Counseling and Education Center - 2708 Patterson Rd, GJ 243-9539

Kim Fitzgerald, MA, Northstar Resources PLL - 140 N. Mesa, Unit 4, Fruita 639-8630

John Mason, MA, LPC, Northstar Resources PLL - 140 N. Mesa, Unit 4, Fruita 639-8630 [jmason9833@aol.com](mailto:jmason9833@aol.com)

Don Self, MA, LPC - 1105 Ute Ave, GJ 462-6859  
[padre.don@gmail.com](mailto:padre.don@gmail.com)

Gretchen Sodamann, LCSW - 518 28 Rd, Ste B210, GJ 720-320-6817

*This list is for informational purposes and not an endorsement of any particular counseling service by the Mesa County Sheriff's Office.*

## Grief Support in Mesa County

HopeWest - Grief Groups for all ages  
241-2212 [www.hopewestco.org](http://www.hopewestco.org)

Miller Homestead - 3090 North 12<sup>th</sup> St.  
241-2212 Open grief group meets Thursdays @ 2:00 p.m.

Camp Good Grief for Children  
245-5377 or email [ctcenter@hospicewco.com](mailto:ctcenter@hospicewco.com)

Grief Share - Bible based grief support group  
First Presbyterian Church 242-1923  
Canyon View Vineyard Church 242-7970  
New Horizons Foursquare Church 243-2484  
Fellowship Church 245-7729

The Compassionate Friends - support group for the death of a child  
Betty 434-3822 or Alice 241-6346  
[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

Heartbeat—support for those who have lost a loved one to suicide  
Chet & Renee Little 985-4551  
[chetandrenee@gmail.com](mailto:chetandrenee@gmail.com)

### Websites

Suicide survivor support

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

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

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

[www.survivorsof suicide.com](http://www.survivorsof suicide.com)

[www.suicideprevention.commongroundhelps.org](http://www.suicideprevention.commongroundhelps.org)

Infant & Maternal loss

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

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

Grief support

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

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

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

## TRAUMATIC DEATH

A traumatic death such as homicide, suicide or accident, compounds, intensifies, and lengthens the grieving process for survivors, often requiring professional support to cope with the loss and its aftermath.

If the **MEDIA** contacts you, we can help you decide what (if anything) you want to say to them, OR, we can assign someone to speak with them on your behalf. Contact us at 244-3275 for assistance.

## DIFFERENCES FOR CHILDREN

Children express loss and grief differently at different stages of maturity, and will re-experience grief as they grow up and their concept of death and dying develops.

Children need honesty. If they feel they are not getting the truth, they will make up something, and their version will be more traumatic than the truth.

They cannot sustain intense feelings for an extended period of time, so they will grieve in spurts. They will grieve intensely, then suddenly return to play as if nothing is wrong.

They may express their grief through physical symptoms (like stomach pain) or changes in behavior (aggression or withdrawal), because they have difficulty knowing how to express feelings in healthful ways.

All children who are experiencing grief, no matter their age, need repeated reassurance, time with a caring adult, and the freedom to express their feelings.

## LOOKING AHEAD

There will come a time when grief and sadness will eventually begin to subside, but there may be times when sadness will resurface very strongly. During the first year especially, holidays, special times, and the anniversary of the death may renew your sadness.

You can't avoid periods of sadness, so whenever possible, plan ahead so the trauma isn't overwhelming. Make arrangements with family and friends to be available for support.

When friends ask what they can do for you, tell them your needs. Let them be there for you.

## Funeral and Burial Benefits

### **Benefits through the Department of Human Services**

#### **Call (970) 241-8480**

If a person has been on Medicaid state medical insurance, their survivor can apply for assistance immediately after the death to their local Department of Human Services. The funeral and burial assistance program has a limit on the benefit, so contacting them before final funeral/memorial arrangements are made is important. It is recommended that you call ahead of time to learn the specific amounts so that you can plan appropriately.

### **Survivors' Benefits through Social Security**

Social Security will pay a lump sum to the surviving widow(er) of the Social Security recipient if living in the same household when the recipient dies. If the recipient dies in a hospital or other care facility, the widow(er) may still be eligible. The current amount is \$255. Call 1-800-772-1213 for more information, or go to [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov)

### **Veterans' Benefits and Burial Assistance**

Individuals who served in the military, their spouses and minor children are eligible for a headstone and burial plot in a national cemetery.

Veterans are eligible for Presidential Memorial Certificates, expressing the nation's recognition of the veteran's service.

Veteran Administration also provides an American flag to drape the casket of the veteran and to the person entitled to a retired military pension. The flag is presented to the next of kin after the funeral service. Contact the VA Regional Office at 1-800-827-1000, or go to [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)

For Military Discharge papers (DD-214) the funeral home may contact: NPRC 1-800-318-5298 or 314-801-0800 Fax 314-801-0764

If the family needs medical records from the Grand Junction VA Contact: John McKinney 970-263-2800 ext. 2547 Bldg 36

## Funeral Homes in Mesa and neighboring counties

Brown's Cremation & Funeral Svc.  
904 N. 7th St.  
Grand Junction, CO 81501  
(970) 255-8888

Callahan-Edfast  
2515 Patterson Road  
Grand Junction, CO 81505  
(970) 243-2450

Grand Valley Funeral Home  
2935 Patterson  
Grand Junction, CO 81501  
(970) 549-1114, (970)261-4020

Legacy Funeral Home  
762 Horizon Drive  
Grand Junction, CO 81506  
(970) 609-2233

Martin Mortuary  
550 North Avenue  
Grand Junction, CO 81501  
(970) 243-1538

Palisade Funeral Home  
729 37 3/10 Road  
Palisade, CO 81526  
(970) 464-5333

Taylor Funeral Service & Crematory  
~105 SE Frontier Ave, Suite F  
Cedaredge, CO 81413  
(970) 856-3232  
~682 1725 Road  
Delta, CO 81416  
(970) 874-9988  
~209 Bridge Street  
Hotchkiss, CO 81419  
(970) 872-3151  
~311 Grand Avenue  
Paonia, CO 81428  
(970) 527-3836

Farnum Holt Funeral Home  
405 West 7th Street  
Glenwood Springs, CO 81601  
(970) 945-5815

Crippin Funeral Home  
802 East Main Street  
Montrose, CO 81401  
(970) 249-2121

Rifle Funeral Home 1400  
Access Road Rifle, CO 81650  
(970) 625-1234

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