

# How to Help Coworkers After a Homicide

- Inform employees of what is occurring in a private location away from their work stations. Provide known facts about what happened, when, and the deceased's family's wishes and plans for services. Close the meeting by offering employees a few moments for absorbing the news.
- Respond to the tragedy by supporting coworkers. Work with your company's human resources department for determining resources available for grieving coworkers. Encourage coworkers to talk with management or human resources; maintain an "open-door" policy for employees wishing to discuss the crime and their loss. Advise coworkers of policies for taking bereavement leave and arrange for coverage as needed for allowing coworkers to attend services.
- Encourage co-workers to share memories of the deceased. Observe coworkers for signs of distress; depression, uncontrollable weeping, missing work and shunning family and associates can be signs of conditions requiring professional counseling or medical help. Coworkers who witnessed the victim's murder may experience post-traumatic stress disorder.
- Supervisors should meet with the employee to determine their needs. Coworkers' responses to the event may occur at different times; continue providing support as needed.
- Continue supporting and talking with bereaved coworkers, but accentuate positive memories rather than revisiting the crime and its aftermath. However, if the coworker wishes to discuss the incident then it is ok to let them open up. Talking about the trauma is healing.

*I'm sorry.  
Words fail me at a time like this.  
I want to share your grief any way I can.  
This must be very painful for you.  
I'm here because I care and want to help.  
I am concerned about you and your family.  
You will all be in my prayers daily.  
I hurt for you.*

Adapted from. [How to Treat the Coworkers of a Murder Victim | eHow.com](http://www.ehow.com/how_8362533_treat-coworkers-murder-victim.html#ixzz1x8Fayga0) [http://www.ehow.com/how\\_8362533\\_treat-coworkers-murder-victim.html#ixzz1x8Fayga0](http://www.ehow.com/how_8362533_treat-coworkers-murder-victim.html#ixzz1x8Fayga0)

- <http://www.azhomicidesurvivors.org/Suggestions%20for%20helping%20Survivors.pdf>

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## What to Say:

- Allow survivors to grieve in whatever manner they wish and for as long as they wish.
- Allow survivors to cry freely. It is a healthy expression of grief and releases tensions.
- Allow survivors to talk about and personalize the victim. Let him or her tell you about the victim, his or her life and the murder. Allow the survivor to criticize the victim and to talk about the good times and the bad times.
- Allow survivors to get angry at you, the criminal justice system, the criminal, the victim, or simply the unfairness of life. Anger needs to be expressed.
- Remember the survivors at holiday times, on the anniversary date of the murder and the victim's birthday. Let the survivors know you remember, too.
- Allow the survivors some occasional "time out" from day-to-day pressures. If possible, offer to help with the children, a day off work, a day out of the house, etc.
- Reassure the survivors that the murder was neither their fault, nor the victim's fault.
- Tell survivors that you are sorry the murder happened and it is horrible that someone they loved was killed.
- Support survivors in their efforts to reconstruct a life, even if it means a major change in lifestyle.
- Let survivors know that you will remain their friend and they mean a great deal to you.

*Although many people want to comfort and help the bereaved, the stress and anxiety of the encounter sometimes makes it difficult to know what is actually helpful. Often, the phrase that is meant to help actually produces more pain and distress. What follows is a partial list of phrases that have been found to be helpful in comforting the grieving person.*

- I'm sorry
- I'm sad for you
- How are you doing with all this?
- I don't know why it happened
- What can I do for you?
- I'm here and I want to listen
- Please tell me what you are feeling
- This must be hard for you
- What's the hardest part for you?
- I'll call you tomorrow (and do it!)
- You must really be hurting
- It isn't fair, is it?
- You must really feel angry
- Take all the time you need
- Thank you for sharing your feelings
- The following list of small gestures and thoughts can mean a great deal to survivors as they struggle with their grief and anger:
  - Allow survivors to grieve in whatever way they wish and for as long as they wish
  - Allow survivors to cry freely. It is a healthy expression of grief and it releases tensions
  - Allow survivors to talk about the victim and the situation. Allow them to talk about the good times and the bad times. Allow them to keep the victim in the family

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- Allow survivors to get angry with you, the victim, the murderer, the justice system or simply the unfairness of life. Anger needs expression (not repression) and sharing.
- Remember the survivors and victims at holiday time, the anniversary date of the horrific event, and birthdays - let the survivors know you remember too
- Reassure the survivors that the murder was not their fault, the victim's fault or God's fault put the blame right where it belongs - on the murderer(s)
- Tell survivors that you are sorry the murder happened and that it is horrible that someone killed their loved one. Validate their feelings
- Support survivors in their effort to reconstruct a life, even (or especially) if it means a major change in their lifestyle, or work, or place of residence
- Let survivors know that you will remain their friend and that they mean a great deal to you
- Encourage survivors to seek additional emotional support, whether from mental health professionals or through grief support groups. They should be reassured that their feelings are normal and that these feelings are overwhelming for most individuals

**Discounting Statements:** Refrain from the following statements:

- You can always find someone worse off than yourself
- You must focus on your precious memories- They are grieving over the loss of their future and any future memories.
- It's better to have loved and lost than never loved at all
- Do not make promises, especially ones you do not plan on keeping.
- Your loved one is in a better place - surviving families feel that the "better place" is home with them.
- You need to go on with your life - let it go- Life will never be the same after a homicide. Things get different, not better.
- I know how you feel - unless you have lost a loved one to murder, you will never know how a Survivor feels.
- He is up with God looking down on you- Families want their loved ones with them, not with God.
- Things happen for a reason - what possible reason could there be to murder anyone?
- God needs him more than we did - who can speak for God? Not everyone is religious and these statements are discounting.
- He will no longer be in pain - most loved ones who were murdered weren't in pain to begin with.
- It will be all right - how can it be all right? Their loved one has been murdered.
- It will get better - things may get easier, but it takes many months and even years - too far in the future for families to find comfort from these words.
- It was God's will - what does that make the murderer - Calling a tragic loss the "will of God" can have a devastating impact on the faith of others.
- He was in the wrong place at the wrong time - this statement places the blame on the victim.
- Time heals all wounds - time doesn't heal anything - it's what you do with that time.
- You are so strong
- I admire your courage
- No sense in crying over spilled milk
- Life goes on
- Count your blessings
- Only the good die young

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- What doesn't kill you, helps you
- God didn't give you anything you cannot handle
- God has something better for you in store
- This will pass

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