

## Sudden vs. Expected Death

### Sudden Death

This is an unexpected loss caused by an accident, homicide, suicide, or illness.

- Shock and disbelief last longer.
- Sudden death can be more confusing and bring up many feelings to deal with all at once.
- There is no time to say goodbye.
- You may have strong feelings of guilt because:
  - › of something you have said or not said about the person who died.
  - › of something you thought, felt, or wished about the person who died.
  - › you think you could have prevented the death.
  - › you survived and your loved one did not.
  - › of wanting to feel normal again.
- This may seem incredibly unfair—especially if the person is young.
- You may experience reoccurring thoughts, dreams, or flashbacks. These are normal and should decrease with time. If they don't decrease, get some help.
- You may feel a need for more information about the incident to gain a better understanding of how the person died. Be sure you can handle this.
- You may feel very vulnerable or jumpy and nervous.

### Expected Death

This is an expected loss caused by a medical condition or illness (such as cancer).

- You may find yourself grieving little losses along the way—not being able to do the same things or go to the same places with your loved one.
- You may experience symptoms of grief even before a loved one has died.
- You may have strong feelings of guilt because:
  - › of something you have said or not said about the person who died.
  - › of something you thought, felt, or wished about the person who died.
  - › you think you could have prevented the death.
  - › you survived and your loved one did not.
  - › of wanting to feel normal again.
- Sometimes there is time to prepare for the death, honor wishes and plan for a life without the loved one.
- Sometimes there is time to say goodbye and to complete unfinished business.



More this way...

How hard and how long you grieve depend on the following factors:

- Your personality.
- Your relationship with the person who died.
- How the person died—sudden or expected death.
- The age of the person who died.
- If you witnessed the death.
- How you were told about the death.
- Your past experience with loss and death.
- Your culture.
- Your belief systems.
- What support is available to you.