

# BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT

## How to Get through the Shock when Someone Dies

Shock is common during the days and weeks immediately following a death.

*Our body's first response to the death of someone close is **SHOCK***

*As shock wears off, the pain of grief comes through.*

### **What is Shock?**

- *Shock* is what we first experienced at a death of someone close (even when we knew it was coming).
- *Shock* is the experience of, or impact of an **intense** or **unexpected** event.
- *Shock* is the body's way of protecting itself.
- Our body perceives the death of someone close, a life changing loss, as a threat unto itself pumping more than normal levels of adrenalin which acts like an anesthetic.
- When we witness or receive the news of the death of someone close, we activate our Fight, Flight or Freeze response.
- This is primarily a **PHYSIOLOGICAL** process that affects our whole being on a cycle lasting between 3-12 months.

### **Some initial responses to shock can be:**

- The mind constantly replays events surrounding the death.
- Feeling like you are living in a daze, dream or nightmare.
- Experiencing free floating anxiety or fear.
- Exhausted but can't access rest.

### **Physical recovery from shock**

- *Rest* the nervous system's antidote to 'Fight, Flight or Freeze' responses.
- *Breathe* gently and deeply - nasal breathing slows down the metabolism.
- *Do gentle exercise* - walk, stretch, yoga, swim.
- *Drink plenty of water* shock dehydrates us- limit alcohol and coffee.
- *Do less and take more time to do your tasks* - acknowledge your reduced capacity.
- *Eat smaller amounts of easily digestible food more often*, simple combinations (avoid high carb and sugar foods).
- *Talk or communicate to someone **you trust**.*
- *Notice when you are hitting overload* – give yourself permission to withdraw and be alone.
- *Self-Soothing* - comforting yourself as you would a child; patting your chest and between your shoulder blades, rubbing gently your stomach, having a bath.
- *Have the story of your loss prepared* so you don't have to keep repeating it; create a phrase that excuses you from the retelling when you need.
- *Physical Contact* - Leaning against a wall; lying on floor; asking a friend to give you a long hug, massage.

*“Death does not end our story...  
Death does not end our relationships...  
Life is changed not ended”*

*Sit on a chair. Feel your feet on the ground. Press on your thighs. Feel your behind on the seat and your back on the chair. Look around you and pick six objects that have red or blue. This should allow you to feel in the present, more grounded, and in your body. Notice how your breath gets deeper and calmer. You may want to go outdoors and find a peaceful place to sit on the grass. As you do, feel how your body can be held and supported by the ground.*

