



# Dealing With Grief after a Critical Incident



**We can never be fully prepared to deal with violent or traumatic events. Each of us will handle an acutely stressful situation differently and we shouldn't compare ourselves with others.**

We can be overwhelmed when dealing with a tragic loss or an event where our belongings or property have been destroyed. Or when there is a life threatening event, serious injury or a loss of life with our coworkers, friends or our family. In the aftermath of a tragic incident, those left behind must work through their grief. This is a process which often takes us through several stages:

**Denial & Shock:** We find the incident so difficult to accept that we may initially have only a sense of numbness and some confusion. A part of us seems to refuse to believe that such a thing has happened. In this stage we may even refuse to believe that we need the caring support of others and may be inclined to isolate ourselves.

**Anger:** At some point our numbness turns to anger. We may direct our anger at a God, others or perhaps even ourselves. We may become irritable in the presence of others who care for us.

**Bargaining & Guilt:** We may begin to direct blame towards ourselves and others. We will have many thoughts beginning with 'if only'. We may feel guilty that we had not done more or perhaps blame ourselves for something we said or did. In either case, we fail to recognize that there were many factors leading up to the incident that we simply had no control over and perhaps many things we simply had no knowledge of.

**Sadness & Depression:** Once we begin to realize our loss, we may feel a heavy sadness and despair. In the depths of our grief we are quite tempted to think that no one cares. We find it difficult to imagine how joy can be restored. We fail, at this point, to recognize that our grief is a difficult season through which we must pass.

**Recovery & New Hope:** As we work through grief and lean on those around us, the darkness gradually fades. We stop blaming ourselves or others and begin to accept what cannot be changed. Rather than letting adversity defeat us, we choose to grow from it. We recognize that while we cannot control the past, we can shape our future. By embracing resilience and seeking meaning, we discover new purpose and hope.

## Some Suggestions for Working through Grief:

**Stay connected to others:** Find a caring person to share your thoughts and feelings with. Don't let yourself isolate.

**Processing Grief & Seeking Support:** Grief isn't linear—you may move between stages, and that's okay. Acknowledge your feelings without letting them consume you. Crying, prayer, walking, talking to a friend, or journaling can help. Balance work, rest, fellowship, and even humor as part of healing. Seek help if needed—if you feel hopeless, overwhelmed, or have thoughts of self-harm, reach out immediately.