





omicide

WORDS TO KNOW

**homicide**

**survivor**

**eulogy**

**manslaughter**

**turmoil**

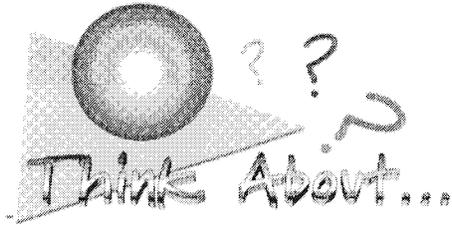
**numbness**

**Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**

OBJECTIVES

As a result of this lesson you should be able to:

- define homicide
- list the types of homicide
- describe the impact of homicide on survivors
- identify coping strategies for dealing with a violent death



Read the following eulogy. A **eulogy** is a statement in honor of a deceased person. It is often prepared for a funeral. Sometimes people write eulogies for their loved ones long after they have died.

### *Eulogy to a Friend*

Lisa Maria Martini, age 18, was found stabbed to death, naked, in her apartment. Her killer has never been found.

I, her best teen friend, remember her, and our times together, as truly bittersweet. I struggle for some justice, and all I can do is write.

Lisa and I were never afraid of the dark, of night, of the woods, of anything. Except sometimes on those long cold winter afternoons we'd spend hiking through the woods near our homes and we'd spot a moose.

Lisa would climb a tree. I don't know why she was afraid of a moose. Obviously, it wasn't what she had to fear in this life.

Lisa's death has left me confused, afraid, sad, and now, angry. I am tired of being afraid. I am tired of fearing the dark, the woods, the future. I am tired of living in fear of being a woman. Of being a person. Of being alive.

I remember Lisa as a young girl, growing up, making mistakes, both of us succeeding and failing at different times; or so often together, judging each other, or refusing to judge, being best friends. I remember all the years we shared — the mornings we walked to school together, the lunch periods we snuck out of school to eat at the forbidden “Tastee Freeze.”

After school we’d roam the woods or play our guitars...together. Junior high years were our best years, learning of social life, boys, crushes, kisses, rejection, and about each other.

Lisa Maria Martini, found stabbed to death. Her killer, or killers — never caught. And if he, or they, were? Is there a punishment to fit this crime? I am bitter because I have had to learn to be afraid. I am angry because the young girl I loved, fought with, competed with, grew up with, was stabbed to death.

There was no reason for her death. Just like there is no reason for any of the violent atrocities confronting women, children, men, animals —all of us— now. To this day I feel sick when I see a knife. I try to think why it happened, and of course there’s no answer. But I was taught in school that there are answers for questions. This is logic.

Lisa Maria Martini, found stabbed to death. There is no logic to that.

She died young, and I think I have finally come to terms with that. She died a grossly violent death, and I will never be able to accept that. It makes me angry, but what can I do with the anger? It is not just one murder. Murder, rape, violence, have become so commonplace that they are on the back of the newspaper instead of the front, if there at all. I turned on the radio one day and heard the newscaster telling of four teenagers found shot to death in a park, and of the murder of a woman and a man in a local bar.

Fear. It's been five years, but the tears still come. Sometimes when I'm getting ready to go to sleep, or taking a bath, or driving, or watching a movie, thousands of places, people, incidents . . . things, remind me of her. It's not so much that she died. People die. It's how she died. It is unfair. It is horrible. I'm sick and tired of being afraid, of crying. Her death was grossly unfair, and I am angry. The violence that is slapping all of us, every day of our lives in this society is unfair. It is wrong. And it must be stopped. I don't know how. I wish to God I did.

There is an attitude prevalent in our society that the victim of a crime is at fault. For example, a woman who is alone is asking for trouble. A woman has a right to be alone if she wants to be. It was not Lisa's fault for liking people that she got murdered. Yes, she hitchhiked and picked up hitchhikers in her time. She wanted to be liked and to be popular. If she had met her murderer before, somehow, then maybe it would have made a difference if she had stayed in her apartment. But I don't know the circumstances of her murder. What I do know is, whether she had met her killer before or not, it was not her fault that she was a victim. It is long past time that we stop accusing the victims and start putting the blame and punishment where it belongs — on the perpetrators.

I remember you, Lisa Maria Martini. I remember you giggling, laughing, running in joy and planning for the future. I miss you.

**Lori Jo Oswald**



**Take a few moments to write your answers to these questions.**

1. Are you surprised that Lori would be remembering Lisa with so much feeling after five years?  
  
**To be afraid?**
2. How long do you think Lori will continue to remember Lisa?  
  
**To be afraid?**  
  
**To be angry?**
3. Have you known someone who was murdered?  
  
If yes, who was it, how long ago did it happen, and what feelings do you have about it now?



Your instructor may ask you to share some of your reactions if you choose.

## DEFINITIONS

**Homicide**, or murder, is the willful (non-negligent) killing of one human being by another (Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI, 1994).

State laws define different degrees of murder/homicide.

**Manslaughter** is the unlawful killing of a human being without malice.

What do you think is the difference between willful and negligent?

Can someone be willfully negligent?

Watch the final section of the Victims of Crime video and then answer these questions.



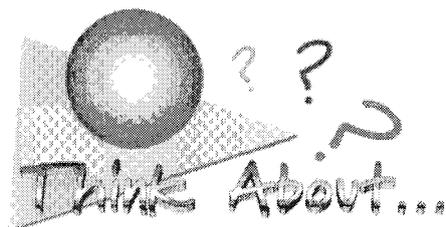
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The United States has more murders per year than almost any other country in the world. Why do you think that is so?

Why do you think people murder?

If you walked into your home and found someone raping your mother, would you be justified in murdering him? Why or why not?



Read the following story and answer the questions.

Jose, 45, and Juan, 22, are brothers. They say they love each other, but when they drink, they argue and sometimes fight.

Juan and Jose are riding back from an evening outing with their mother and a friend. They have been drinking, so their mother is driving. Juan is in the front passenger seat. The young men begin to argue loudly. Their mother stops the car and says that one of them must get out and catch a bus home. However, the argument calms down, so they all continue to travel together. The mother sees Jose's gun on the floorboard of the back seat, so she takes it and puts it under her seat. Juan is also carrying a gun, but his mother doesn't know it.

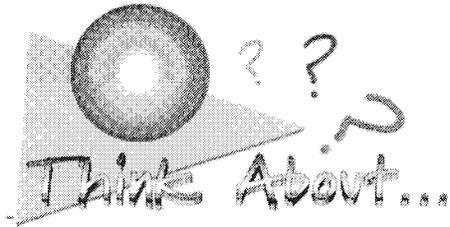
Several miles down the highway the argument begins again. Jose, who is in the back seat, hits his brother in the back of the head. Juan, pulls out his gun and shoots Jose six times at point blank range. As their mother stops the car, Juan jumps out and runs. The mother tries to help Jose, but she can't. He is dead.

1. **Whose fault is Jose's death?**
2. **Was this self-defense?**
3. **How do you think Jose's and Juan's mother feels?**
4. **Is Jose's and Juan's mother put in a difficult spot? Why?**

5. Who are the eyewitnesses to the murder?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. How many of these witnesses will feel okay about testifying?

Jose was not married but lived with Patricia, and they had one child.

1. Who pays for the funeral expenses?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How much do you think the average funeral costs?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Do you have a life insurance policy?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What punishment do you think Juan should get?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What physical, emotional and financial impact do you think Jose's death will have on his family and close friends?



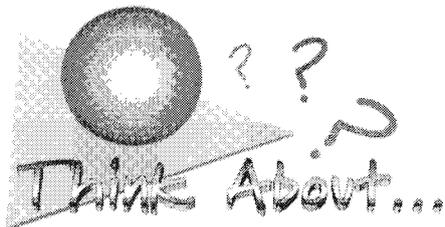
Watch the video segment of homicide survivors from "Victims of Crime: A Life Sentence" and answer the following questions:

1. How was the first homicide survivor impacted by the murder of her son?
2. What does she say about offenders having "hard lives"?
3. How was the second homicide survivor impacted by the murder of her daughter?

4. What did she say about the “physical pain” she experienced?

5. What did she say about guns?

6. What did she say about the offenders?



Read the following story and answer the question.

Kenny’s sense of himself as a capable and worthy young man was organized around his role as his little sister’s protector.

Today, he lounges against the fender of his car in his neighborhood and explains. “I was four when Gail was born. When Mama brought her home, I said, ‘This is my baby.’ She always was. Even when I got mad at

her or she got in my stuff, I was always like, 'I'm her big brother and I'm gonna take care of her.' The day she started kindergarten, I was the one that walked her to school.

"It happened in August, in the late afternoon. Mama told me to go to the store. I said, 'C'mon, Gail, come down to the store with me and help me carry the stuff and I'll buy you a Popsicle. She loved grape Popsicles.

"That car, I never saw it coming. Folks said he was doin' at least sixty. He just came whalin' down the street and up on the sidewalk where we were walking. I pulled Gail as hard as I could, but he just kept coming too fast."

Behind his silver sunglasses, Kenny's eyes fill with tears. His mouth sags, his scowl crumbles, and the 23-year-old gang member weeps softly. "I was eleven when that guy killed my sister. I tell Mama I was on the right track till Gail got killed. Ain't nothin' gone right for me since."

Gail lived for eight days, unconscious. All Kenny remembers of that time was missing his mother who stayed at the hospital. Gail was in the intensive care unit, and children were not allowed to visit. The day Gail died, their mother flew back to South Carolina where all the family lived. "She didn't even come to tell me Gail had died. The lady who was keeping me told me."

Kenny flew alone to join his mother the day of the funeral. "I hadn't seen Mama but a few minutes in almost two weeks, and now there's all these people around her sayin' 'Don't bother your mamma. She's havin' a hard enough time as it is.' So I kept to myself and tried not to bother her.

"We didn't talk much about Gail. I guess we just never got around to it."

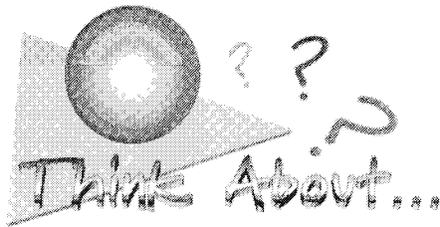
I used to see Gail a lot. Clear as day. She'd be in the room with me. Not sayin' anything. Just standing there with light all around her. I told Mama about seeing her, and she sent me to my Auntie in South Carolina. I missed Mama and I wanted to go home. They said, 'You still seeing your sister?' I said no, so they let me go home.

"Junior High got worse. I'd just know that my teachers were talking about Gail, saying bad things about her. I couldn't keep my mind on school. I just quit going. Mama took me to a doctor. I talked to him once, and he said Mama should come too, but we didn't go back."

Kenny hung out with older boys who stole cars, and sometimes he helped them. At fifteen, he was arrested and charged with accessory to auto theft. He spent two years at California Youth Authority. He has served time for possession of stolen goods, driving without a license, failure to appear in court, and resisting arrest. Although he earned his GED in jail, he has few job skills. The longest he has held a job is five months. He feels his life is going nowhere.

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**Whose fault is it that Kenny's life "is going nowhere?"**



Watch the video segment of the homicide survivor from "How It Feels" and answer the following questions:

1. How did the homicide survivor find out about the murder of her daughter?
2. What does she say about the police that talked to her?
3. What was the emotional impact on the homicide survivor?

### Common Reactions to Homicide

The common response to any extraordinary trauma is crisis. The long-term effect of the crisis is influenced by a number of factors, such as:

- the intensity of the event
- the suddenness of the event
- whether the event was anticipated
- our state of mind prior to the event

**It is clear that learning of a loved one's murder is intense, sudden, and virtually impossible to understand.** Hence, most survivors face a long period of emotional struggle to reconstruct a devastated life. That private turmoil is characterized by a number of different reactions.

### Numbness

Survivors report suffering an initial phase of shock and confusion. The shock at receiving the information of the murder is experienced both mentally and physically. Typically, the survivor is unable to accept the news of the death and even less able to comprehend the murder. After a rush of feelings which accompany the adrenaline reaction to the news, many survivors collapse into a state of being stunned or numbed with physical exhaustion.

Even that paints too predictable a picture. In fact, the feelings aroused by the devastating death notification and the way these reactions show themselves in the survivors' behavior, vary considerably from one person to another. There is a very wide range of normal responses in thinking, feeling, and behavior. All the following are typical reactions of family members and friends:

- **preoccupation with the survivor's personal loss**
- **horror about the suffering that the murder victim may have suffered**
- **a need to know every detail of the victim's death**
- **attacks of panic**
- **a fixation on maintaining a day-to-day routine, though this may be shattered at times by outbursts of intense emotion**
- **restlessness and insomnia**

- an inability to concentrate
- flashbacks to the memory of receiving the death notification or the memory of, or an imagined picture of the crime itself
- rage at the assailant
- fear for one's own life or that of other loved ones
- self-blame about something the survivor did or didn't do to prevent the murder
- hostility towards others
- utter hopelessness and helplessness.

1. Look over the list of "typical survivor reactions during the acute stages of crisis" on the previous page and imagine that you have been murdered. Rank on a scale of 1 being the most likely and twelve being the least likely the reactions you believe your mother would be experiencing during the first few months after your death.

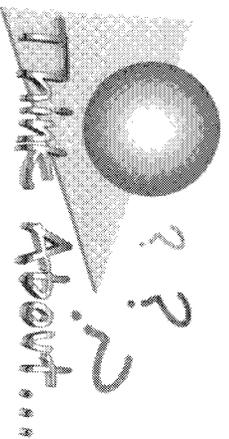
2. Go back and do the same for your closest brother or sister.



For most survivors, the distress of the murder itself is compounded by a number of other stressors:

- the notification process
- identification of the body
- funeral arrangements
- medical bills
- funeral and burial expenses
- dealing with the criminal justice system

1. Beside each item in the list above, write the name of the person in your family who would likely deal with the problem. For example, who would probably be notified of your death?  
  
Who would probably go to the medical examiner's office to identify your body, etc.



You have been murdered. Plan your funeral and, as a closing, write your eulogy. Assume that your family has a limited income and a savings of approximately \$1500.00.

Planning Your Funeral Continued...



**Additional problems of homicide survivors are listed below:**

- Seeming indifference of the community to the plight of survivors.
- Isolation and helplessness in a world seen as hostile and uncaring and that frequently blames the victim.
- Feelings of guilt for not having been able to protect the victim.
- Growing public sympathy for perpetrators of crimes of passion
- Disparities in the judicial system (frequently, punishments for property crimes are as great as, or greater than, for the crime of taking a human life).
- Sensational and inaccurate media coverage.
- Financial burden of hiring private investigators, etc., when they feel that law enforcement officers are not doing an adequate job or when there are too many unanswered questions.
- Anger over a plea bargain arrangement.
- Outrage about the leniency of the murderer's sentence.
- Frustration at not being allowed inside the courtroom at the time of trial.
- The memory of a mutilated body at the morgue.
- Lack of information about what is going on.

- Unanswered questions—about the crime, the criminal justice system (Why is the killer on bail, walking the streets, after he has confessed to the crime? Why was the confession thrown out? Why do they keep postponing the trial and not letting us know?)
- Financial burden for professional counseling for surviving family members.
- The feeling that the murderer, if found, has all the rights.
- The seemingly endless grief.
- Loss of ability to function on the job, at home or in school.
- \* The strain this puts on marriages and family relationships, frequently resulting in divorce.
- Getting back the personal belongings of a murder victim, even those which are not essential to a trial.
- The disparity between what is spent for murderers and what is spent for victims' families.

1. **Do you know a family in which a loved one has been murdered or suddenly killed in a vehicular crash? If so, please check the items above that have been difficult for them. Be prepared to share these reactions with the rest of the class if your instructor asks you to.**

In the article *'Out of Anger to Peace of Mind'*, Dr. Richard Gayton (1995) outlined fourteen post trauma emotional reactions common to survivors of violence. All or part of these symptoms are characteristic of a syndrome known as **post traumatic stress disorder**.

1. \_\_\_\_ have intrusive distressing memories of the violent event
2. \_\_\_\_ have distressing dreams of the violence
3. \_\_\_\_ have sudden feelings that the violence is happening again
4. \_\_\_\_ are reminded of the trauma on Anniversary days which sets off extreme emotional distress: crying, panic, rage, guilt
5. \_\_\_\_ try to avoid thoughts or feelings associated with the violence
6. \_\_\_\_ avoid situations that remind them of the violence
7. \_\_\_\_ experience memory loss regarding an important event that took place during the violence.
8. \_\_\_\_ have diminished interest in the activities once enjoyed
9. \_\_\_\_ have a sense of being different from others - detached, estranged
10. \_\_\_\_ have a feeling there is no future
11. \_\_\_\_ have trouble feeling love for anyone
12. \_\_\_\_ have difficulty falling or staying asleep
13. \_\_\_\_ are irritable, startle easily and have difficulty concentrating on work
14. \_\_\_\_ may overreact to loud noises or sudden movements

**Go back through the list and check reactions you have had to a major stressor in your life.**

GUEST SPEAKER NOTES

1

