

A Guide to Rebuilding Shattered Lives

Setting the Tone: Week One

The next 6 weeks is for you to use as you feel able. Our task as facilitators is to establish a supportive, safe atmosphere and the opportunity for you to share. You may share as little or as much as you feel able to. Sharing or being silent both are OK. Feel free to contribute at your own pace. Tears are OK, they show that you cared very much for your loved one, and that you care for yourself. In order to help support each other better, keep aware that the time today is limited, and to remember how to best share and help each other, we will review some ground rules or reminders.

Firstly, it takes courage to come here, and to speak about ourselves. So can I ask that we all listen when someone is speaking, and try to be aware when someone is just pausing and needs silence and time and space before continuing to speak? Can I suggest something else in relation to listening that you may be well aware of? That is, that what we are most looking for in our struggle is listening and understanding, and rarely do we need advice. If we do, we usually ask directly for it. So be wary about jumping in with advice and suggestions.

Secondly, we are not here to rescue each other, but to listen and to support each other to regain confidence in using our strengths. Distressing though it may be, we need to express and feel our pain. Unless we are “with” our pain, we cannot learn to walk beside it. So, someone who is distressed and crying is actually doing something very positive. They are learning to handle their pain. The best support we can give is to listen, and encourage them to talk about their feelings and experiences.

Thirdly, I know our own needs are often very strong and we get wound up with the need to express and talk about them. However time is limited, and so we ask your permission for us to say “we must move on” if it becomes necessary. Is that OK?

Fourthly, is the issue of confidentiality. We ask you to keep what is shared today within the group. Some of us don't care who knows our story, but some of us are private people and will feel more comfortable about sharing if we know that what we share will remain private in this group. Also we will inevitably be talking about other people who are not here (our children, other family members, friends, professionals, etc.), and their privacy also needs to be respected.

Adapted from Lifeline Suicide Bereavement Support Groups and the B.C. Victims of Homicide *Resource Guide for Facilitators of Homicide Loss Support Group* (March 2014) and *Canadian Parents Of Murdered Children's Rebuilding Shattered Lives* pilot project (March – April 2016).