

## WHEN SOMEONE HAS LOST A LOVED ONE IN A DROWNING ACCIDENT...

## WHEN SOMEONE HAS BEEN TRAUMATIZED AS A WITNESS TO A DROWNING INCIDENT...

If you have lost a loved one to drowning or witnessed someone drown...

- Recognize that you are in shock.
- If the physical remains have been recovered, you will begin the natural grieving process, but the emotional trauma will also need a lot of time to heal.
- If the physical remains are missing (for example if your friend or loved one is "missing and presumed drowned") this may lead to a prolonged ordeal with the search and recovery process and a great deal of exposure to trauma if you remain on scene or participate in the recovery efforts.
- There is **GRIEF**. And there is **TRAUMA**.
- Drowning deaths are always traumatic. Educate yourself about the normal grieving process, as well as traumatic grief and post-traumatic stress.

### THINGS TO TRY TO RELIEVE SOME OF THE STRESS:

Structure your time-keep busy...

- Periods of strenuous physical exercise, alternated with relaxation will help alleviate some of the physical reactions
- You *ARE* normal and having a normal reaction - do not label yourself as "crazy" even though things may feel slightly crazy at the moment
- Talk to people - talk is the best medicine
- Be aware of numbing the pain with overuse of drugs or alcohol
- Reach out - PEOPLE DO CARE

- Maintain as normal a schedule as possible
- Spend time with others if it feels right to do so, but allow for quiet reflection as well
- Help your family, friends, and co-workers as much as possible by sharing your feelings and checking out how they are doing
- Give yourself permission to feel rotten and share your feelings with others
- Keep a journal; write your way through those sleepless hours
- Do things that make you feel good
- Realize you are under stress
- Don't make any big life changes
- Do make as many daily decisions as possible which will give you a feeling of control over your life. i.e. if someone asks you what you want to eat, answer them even if you are not sure
- Get plenty of rest
- Recurring thoughts, dreams, flashbacks are normal - don't try to fight them - they should decrease over time and become less painful
- Eat well balanced and regular meals (even if you don't feel like it)

#### **FOR FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS**

- Listen carefully
- Spend time with the traumatized person
- Offer your assistance and a listening ear, even if they have not asked for help
- Reassure them that they are safe

- Help them with everyday tasks like cleaning, meal preparations, caring for the family, etc.
- Give them some private time
- Don't take their anger or other feelings personally
- Don't patronize them with platitudes, including comments like, "Don't worry, your loved one is with God now..." Traumatized and grieving people are not always consoled by those statements. Instead tell them that you are sorry that such an event has occurred and that you want to support and assist them in whatever ways will be useful to them

*Education is a vital part of the healing process. Review the information posted on our website, as well as the archive of email messages.*

We are here for you.

Members of the Drowning Support Network

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/DrowningSupportNetwork>