

Dealing with Child Deaths

What makes it difficult?

- Having your own child, or knowing a child that is the same age as the victim
- Knowing the victim or aspects of the victim's life (i.e. school, neighborhood)
- Being in a similar stage in your life with your family (i.e. young children at home)
- Having a similar background as the victim
- Having something in common with someone at the scene
- Having the death remind you of another loss or past experience
- Feeling as though you could have done more to save the child's life

How can you cope and stay resilient?

In order to maintain resiliency, you need to have a variety of healthy coping skills. Every child death is different and individuals deal with it differently. There is no perfect way to deal with the death of a child but there are ways to decrease your risk of negative coping.

Healthy coping skills can include:

- Tactical breathing
- Relaxation techniques
- Talking with family, friends, chaplain, therapist or a member of your peer support team
- Ask for a debriefing
- Call your spouse and/or check on your children
- Take time for exercise or do something you enjoy

What should you avoid?

Dealing with the death of a child at any point in life is never easy. It is made more difficult when the responder feels powerless or feels they were not given a chance to use their skills to save the child's life. Responding to the death of a child can also become increasingly difficult when the "would have, could have, should have" thinking pattern arises.

The following should be avoided:

- Pretending the call did not affect you if it did
- Drinking alcohol for the first few days following the death
- Isolating from family, friends and peers
- Watching the news or spending too much time on social media



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This content is provided as a support resource and is not intended to replace recommendations from a physician or licensed mental health professional. Dial 911 for life threatening events.