

## A VIOLENT DEATH

Sometime the images that are unseen may be worse than the images we have actually witnessed. Exploring the imagination can be a cruel factor in a violent death, particularly when the victim is a child.

A parent whose child was murdered said that for many years she was tortured by the unseen and she simply could not push away those faces of pain she held in her innermost self. She said that the first few days following the child's death are locked in her mind and often they come to the surface in a terrifying manner.

When a child dies violently – by murder, in a fire, by accident, there is always agony and turmoil. The suddenness of the death is shattering an impossible to believe – the child is fine, healthy, a part of the family, participating in everyday tasks, and then...the child is no longer alive. Death that comes crashing down on a family is an intruder that is never expected and may never be accepted. Often the death becomes public and people in the community, and in some cases the whole country will have a concept of what must have taken place. Sharing a child's death which is now in the public domain is brutal as strangers talk about and consider the horror of the incident. It is so difficult for the brothers and sisters of the child who hear their friends and fellow students talking about the death in a casual manner or commenting without thinking. In those cases which are heard in court, there may be extensive media coverage and every moment is an agonizing step along the path of the tragedy. Loss of privacy affects grieving and tears are no longer private when cameras fix their focus on faces of sorrow.

When violence invades our lives we tend to want to gather our own around us and protect the other children so that no harm may ever touch them in a similar way. Some parents become overly protective and want to control their children's every move and this can be another devastating result of the death. It is often difficult to "move on" when violence has robbed a family of their son or daughter. The stress for parents is phenomenal and there may be a sense of guilt, of not understanding why this ever happened, of judging other family members, not only at the time of the child's death but also in the aftermath.

The impact of a violent death demands years of healing for every member of the family; it cries out for understanding and compassion; it must allow for times of silence when families do not want to talk about the horror that has taken place. In dealing with the survivors it is important to allow them to choose their time to talk and to listen to the hurts that are in their hearts.

Because we all react so differently to a personal tragedy it is important to find someone with whom we can share a little time in a moment of reflection or a thought in silence.

Death brings home the message that life is precious and fragile and it can be taken away without notice...that is the hard reality of a violent death.

From "Time to Remember"  
By Barbara Klich