



# WHAT TO DO WHEN THE POLICE LEAVE

A Guide to the First Days of Traumatic Loss

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THIRD EDITION

Bill Jenkins

*With Foreword by*  
Patricia Cornwell

Homicide, Suicide, Car Crash, Tragic Accident  
A Victim's Father Addresses the Special Needs of  
Traumatic Loss With Insight and Sensitivity

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THE POLICE LEAVE:**

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of Traumatic Loss

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WBJ Press, Richmond, VA

## **Dedication**

This work is lovingly dedicated  
to the memory of my son,  
William Jenkins,

and to loved ones everywhere who are victims of  
violence in our communities, streets, and homes.

It is our fervent hope and prayer that someday  
books such as this will be obsolete,  
that the courtrooms and prisons will stand vacant,  
and that the police will have no need to patrol our streets.

For in that day, we will all take upon ourselves  
the responsibility to enforce peace, respect, and kindness  
in our world for the good of all.

**William Benjamin Jenkins**

September 16, 1980 - August 12, 1997

17<sup>th</sup> Homicide Victim of 1997,  
Henrico County, Virginia

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*I am embarking on a journey of suffering which began August 12. ... [O]ut of this one tragedy, we have set ourselves a challenge to see just how many good things we can bring.*

Internet Newsgroup Post, August 1997

## Preface

**T**his book is different from other books on grief and loss in two ways. First, it is a victim's voice reaching out to other victims and survivors of traumatic loss with practical advice born from firsthand experience. I have tried to speak from the inside of grief, not the outside looking in. The advice in this book is the result of countless hours of personal mourning; working with and talking to victim advocates and other professionals; and most importantly of all, talking to other victims and survivors, some very young in their grief, and others with many long years behind them.

Second, it is not a retelling of our story. Instead, it is a guidebook to help you along your way. It is frank and simple advice – information that has been directly helpful to us and others. It is a collection of all the things we could think of that family and friends need to know following a tragic loss.

Every effort has been made to ensure that this information is sensible and responsible and is in accord with prevailing and generally accepted practices. This book is not intended to *replace* professional medical, psychological, legal, or spiritual counseling. Hopefully, it will be an invaluable tool for these caregivers as they help you with the difficult journey ahead.

This book is written solely from the victim's perspective. Experts in various fields made valuable contributions when needed, but grief is as varied and complex as life itself and each individual and situation is different. You must find what works best for you and your family in the days ahead. I hope that this book will help make your first steps along this path healthy ones.

*We are all in this together; we're all walking hand in hand. Hold on tight and maybe together we can make this ride a little less rocky.*

Internet Newsgroup Post, December 1997

## **“What Do We Do Now?”**

If you are reading this book after being notified of the death of a loved one, you are no doubt asking, as many others have, a difficult question: “What do we do now?” Traumatic loss – whether through homicide, car crash, suicide, accident, or any other factor – is a shocking, life-changing tragedy which leads to a roller coaster ride of emotions, events, and feelings.

This book is designed to help pave the way for you in making some of the most important decisions in the days ahead, and to help you understand some of the natural processes which take over when we experience this kind of loss. It is the kind of book that I should have received when first informed of my son’s death the night he was shot and killed. He was on his second day of work when the restaurant where he was employed was robbed at closing time by a gunman assisted by two young female accomplices. All are now serving lengthy prison terms for robbery and murder.

If you are like many people, you probably don’t feel like reading anything right now, but at least try to get through the next chapter, or give this book to a family member or friend to read for you. Some very valuable advice is contained here – advice which others have paid a dear price to be able to give.

This book would not be possible without the contributions of survivors of traumatic loss – willingly given in order to help survivors of traumatic loss – and the input of the professional caregivers and victim/witness advocates who work with them.