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**Parent Loss due to Violent Crimes**

 It is tragic when people lose their parents, especially for children. After people lose their parents, they should receive as much support as they can. They should be given a choice whether they want support or not, because the people who really need the support, are not getting it. People who have lost parents due to violent crimes suffer from many symptoms that really affect them. Children have very different symptoms than adults when they lose a parent. People need a lot of support when they lose a parent because it affects them emotionally. Is enough emotional support given to those who have lost parents due to violent crimes? People need some type of support that could help them deal with their loss. Counseling is a good way to deal with parent loss because they have someone to talk to and express their feelings to. Another good way to deal with loss is through sports because they help people get rid of their stress and tension. Community colleges have programs that provide sports teams and free counseling that can help support the people who have lost parents due to violent crimes. We need to recruit people for these specific programs within a Community College to help support people who have lost parents due to violent crimes.

 Losing a parent can create many symptoms for their children that could really affect them and even change their lives. These symptoms could restrict them from doing everyday things. They might get distant from their peers and will not have people to talk to. By not having people to talk to, they will not be able to suppress their loss by themselves. In the Article, “Family Survivors of Homicide II,” Laurence Miller talks about the different symptoms, syndromes, and reaction patterns of children when they lose their caregivers. He first talks about the children’s understanding of death. Miller explains how most children are not told about death so they do not know much about it. That is why when their caregivers pass, they experience harmful symptoms. Miller argues that the symptoms seen in children differ than the ones seen in adults. One of the symptoms that is seen in children is self-blame. Often times, the child might blame themselves for their parent’s murder. Miller says, “Younger children may fantasize that the loved one’s murder was “punishment” for some imagined wrongdoing on the child’s part (75). As explained earlier, children do not understand the meaning of death. Therefore they blame themselves. They believe they are being punished. The child should not feel guilty for something they did not do and if they do, it is not fair to them if they do not receive the support they need. One of the most tragic symptoms is foreshadowing future. Miller says that children believe they will never grow up so they do not prepare for the future. The children will decide not to go to school, not to follow adult advice or to make new friends because they do not trust anyone. They do not want to befriend anyone because they think they might kill them (Miller 75). Not believing in a good future can be tragic for the children because they can end up like the deceased parent. When children are isolated from their friends and family, they are not able to deal with their loss. By not having family or friends to talk to, they can turn to drugs or even gangs to fill the empty space they have inside. Not only are the children affected by a caregiver’s death, but the young adults too, as well as the whole family. You may think that children have the worst symptoms because they are children, but they do not. Children recover from death faster than adults do, because adults tend to keep their remorse inside. In the article, “Family Survivors of Homicide I,” Lawrence Miller, talks about the different symptoms the adults may develop after a loss. One of the symptoms they develop is anger. The anger is not towards themselves, but towards the killer. Since their anger is towards the killer, the people might turn to illegal actions to try to get even with the killer. Miller states, “Whether the murderer is identified, caught, and convicted, the anger may persist for years” (69). The killer may have been convicted but that is not enough to stop their anger. It is not good to keep things inside because anger can build on until the person explodes with anger. It is better to talk to people about their problem so they can release their anger little by little. Another symptom the person may develop after a loss is trauma. They will develop phobic avoidance. The people will avoid going out after dark and avoid people, foods, music and anything related to the crime trauma. When this happens, the person usually feels an urge for their family members to be close so when they need them, they are there (Miller 69). The people who have lost parents due to violent crimes feel insecure and unsafe because their parent died due to a violent crime. They do not feel safe because they are afraid they might be next. These feelings are horrible especially if no support is given to these people. What type of support do people who have lost parents due to violent crimes need?

 Counseling is a great way to deal with parent loss. It has been proven to be helpful to those in need. In the Academy for College Excellence program (ACE) from Los Medanos College, a group of Social Justice students, including me, researched on whether adequate support was given to those who have lost parents due to violent crimes. We surveyed about 100 people and all had experienced loss due to violent crimes. The research showed that grief counseling helped the people be less angry. We stated, “Only 34% went to one or more counseling sessions. It appears that the more they went, the more it seemed to help them with their anger issues as opposed to 66% of the people who did not see a grief counselor were always or often angry. So we need to get people to go!” People who saw a counselor said it helped them with their anger issues and the ones who did not go, said they were always angry. That tells us that counseling has a positive effect on people who have lost parents due to violent crimes. Other evidence that proves counseling is effective is the article, “Counseling children and young people: A review of the evidence for its effectiveness.” Sue Pattison and Belinda Harris did a review on whether counseling is effective towards children and young people. They decided to use four different approaches when dealing with the people. They used cognitive-behavioral, psychoanalytic, humanistic and creative therapies. They found out that the people they studied on experienced greater improvements in behavior, self esteem, academic performance and many more. Pattison and Belinda state, “The results of the review show counseling to be a positive, useful and effective intervention across the full range of issues presented by children and young adults” (235). The people showed improvements by attending counseling. This shows that counseling is a good support system and a good way to deal with parent loss. Even though counseling is a good way to support people who have lost parents due to violent crimes, they still need a distraction to help them recover. What kind of distraction can be used to support people who have lost parents due to violent crimes?

A soccer program (or any other sport) would be a perfect way to help support people who lost parents due to violent crimes because they are known to release stress and anger. People can release their anger and tension through playing soccer instead of releasing it to other people. They will have the opportunity to be social around the people who have the same problem and will relate to each other. Playing soccer solves many problems for the people who have lost parents due to violent crimes because it will help them take their mind off the crime and loss. They will be able to trust their teammates and they will have friends to talk to about their loss and feelings. Another good thing about soccer is that it keeps the person motivated to look forward to a good future. A lot of times when people lose a parent, they lose interest to take care of their bodies, and playing soccer would keep them healthy and fit. The people who have lost parents due to violent crimes need a place where they can get involved in counseling and soccer teams. What needs to be done to connect counseling and soccer to people who have lost parents due to violent crimes?

What must be done is recruit people who have lost parents due to violent crimes into programs within community colleges that offer counseling and soccer programs. There are many ways we can connect people with soccer and counseling. We could find local soccer teams and ask them if they could join, and find counselors in their area. It is possible to do that but that would mean we would have to have reliable transportation from one place to another. There is one place where you can find counseling and soccer programs that run pretty much free. Best of all, it’s all in one place. Community Colleges such as Los Medanos College offer all of this and much more. There are many academic programs such as ACE, AVID, and PUENTE who all contribute to student success. By being involved in these programs and enrolled in community colleges they offer free counseling. Also in programs such as ACE, a soccer program has been formed while AVID and PUENTE are starting to form teams as well. We need to recruit the victims and have them sign up for the programs that will give them great benefits and success.

People who lost parents due to violent crimes need adequate support for a lot of reasons. Losing a parent affects people drastically, especially through a violent crime. Those people need to attend counseling at least 2 to 5 times because it has been proven to have a positive effect against them. Another thing is that we must keep them active and social with people their own age. That’s where they could take advantage of soccer programs or any other sport because if you are enrolled into a program like ACE, you can start a new soccer team. The only way these people can take advantage of counseling and soccer programs is if they are enrolled in a Community College like LMC. So by recruiting people who lost parents due to violent crimes to community colleges they will have free counseling and soccer programs available to them. By being enrolled in college, it will give them motivation to become successful in life because there are many opportunities for them. The person might not even like soccer, but by starting playing soccer the person may start to feel motivated to start a different sports program. This will show leadership and success that they could not have done without the program. By recruiting people who lost parents due to violent crimes to attend college and enroll into a program like ACE, they are given so many opportunities to succeed and suppress their loss. By doing this, the people who lost parents due to violent crimes receive the adequate support they need.

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