



FACING SUDDEN LOSS

Of all the experiences we confront in life, the toughest to face is the sudden, unexpected loss of someone we love or feel close to, including our flying partners.

Loss in itself is painful enough, but sudden loss is shocking. The shock doubles our pain and intensifies our grief. Even if on some level we understand that no one lives forever, actually losing people we care for is unimaginable. When we know someone has a chronic disease, we have a chance to begin to prepare for their loss -- at least a little. However, the unexpected death of a loved one/friend, especially by suicide, can leave us stunned, lost, and overwhelmed with pain. We may not know where to begin to cope.

When we face a sudden loss, all at once we have three overwhelming tasks to deal with: Our grief over the loss of our loved one/friend, the absence of this special person from our daily lives, and the changes in our lives that are caused by this loss. Each is a big task to take on, and each will become a part of our mourning and healing process.

It helps to bear in mind that emotional pain isn't constant, and that we don't have to grieve forever. We will love forever, whether our loved ones are with us in body or not, but we do not need to grieve to honor that love.

People who have suffered sudden loss have taught us two very important beginning ways to help heal:

- ✓ Do your mourning now. Being strong and brave is important, but never miss an opportunity to cry. That is not self-indulgent, but simply sensible and honest in dealing with your emotions.
- ✓ Take special care of yourself through your grief. One way to do this is by surrounding yourself with support. The AFA EAP is one resource available to you. You can contact local AFA EAP representatives through the AFA EAP helpline at 800-424-2406