

The First 72 Hours

What to do after a traumatic event or sudden loss

There is no right way to move through the first hours and days after loss or trauma. This guide is not a checklist you must complete — it is a soft companion. Read only what feels useful. Skip anything that doesn't. Come back to it when you can.

First, Breathe

Your body is in shock. Before anything else:

- Place a hand on your chest. Take one slow breath in through your nose, out through your mouth.
- Drink a glass of water. Trauma dehydrates the body quickly.
- Sit down. If you feel dizzy or numb, lie flat and elevate your feet.
- Speak your name out loud. Grounding yourself in the present is enough for now.

The First 24 Hours

ONE THING AT A TIME

You do not have to make big decisions today. If someone is pressuring you, it is okay to say “I need more time.” The only decisions that truly must happen in the first day are:

- Notify one trusted person — family, friend, pastor, or coach — who can sit with you.
- If the loss involves law enforcement, hospitals, or a coroner, ask for a written contact and case number.
- Eat something small, even if you aren't hungry. Toast, broth, fruit — anything soft.
- Try to rest, even if you can't sleep. Lie in a dark, quiet room with your eyes closed.

WHAT TO SAY WHEN CALLING FOR HELP

“Something has happened and I need someone with me. Can you come, or stay on the phone?” That is enough. You do not have to explain.

Hours 24–48

PROTECT YOUR ENERGY

- Put your phone on Do Not Disturb. Choose 2–3 people who can screen calls and messages.

- Post one short update if needed: “Thank you for the love. We’ll share details when we can.”
- Ask a friend to bring groceries or a hot meal — you do not have to cook or shop.
- Cancel or postpone anything non-essential this week. People will understand.

PRACTICAL PAPERWORK (only if urgent)

- Locate ID, insurance cards, and any funeral or medical documents in one folder.
- Ask a trusted person to help make lists — do not try to remember everything yourself.
- If you must speak with employers, schools, or agencies, keep calls short. It is okay to cry.

Hours 48–72

SMALL RHYTHMS RETURN

By now the body is exhausted. Grief comes in waves — you may feel numb, then flooded, then numb again. All of it is normal. Try to give yourself:

- One meal, one glass of water, one shower — in whatever order you can.
- Ten minutes outside. Sunlight on your skin, feet on the ground.
- Permission to cry, to be angry, to laugh, to feel nothing. Every wave passes.
- One person to check in with tonight, even by text: “I’m still here.”

Warning Signs — Reach Out for Support

Please call 988 or a trusted person if you experience:

- Thoughts of harming yourself or others.
- Being unable to drink water or eat anything for more than 24 hours.
- Flashbacks, panic attacks, or dissociation that don’t ease.
- Feeling completely alone with no one to call.

Crisis Support Available 24/7

- **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** — call or text **988**
- **Crisis Text Line** — text **HOME** to **741741**
- **Disaster Distress Helpline** — **1-800-985-5990**
- **Emergency** — **911** if you or someone else is in immediate danger

A Note From Tausha

I know these hours. I have lived them. If, when you are ready, you want someone to walk with you through what comes next, I’m here. There is no timeline. There is no right way to grieve. You are still standing — and that is enough for today.

Still Standing Grief & Trauma Coaching, LLC • stillstandinggriefcoaching.com • 919-679-7607

Peer support and coaching — not clinical therapy, diagnosis, or medical treatment.