

Scripted Role Play #3 - English

Sudden Loss of Family Member

Background: The bereavement coordinator is talking to the wife of a patient who passed away several months ago.

Provider: Good afternoon. I'm Rachel Rogers, the bereavement coordinator at Mercy Hospital. I wanted to come and talk to you about your husband, Henry. First and foremost, I really want to express my deepest sympathies to you and your family for Henry's death. I understand it was unexpected and quite sudden.

Wife: Yes.

Provider: I often meet with families who suffer the loss of a loved one to discuss some of the feelings associated with loss and really just to check in and see how you're doing. Since the length of the bereavement process depends entirely on each individual, some family members are more willing to speak about their feelings sooner than others. Please know that it may take months or even years until you are willing or able to speak openly about Henry and his passing. I have a few questions I would like to ask you, but before I begin, is there anything you would like to talk about?

Wife: No

Provider: OK. Can you tell me more about how he passed away?

Wife: Well, he came to the hospital with a lot of pain. He had so much pain. I had never seen him like that. He was complaining about a terrible amount of pain right here [rubbing the abdomen.] Well, we got to the emergency room and they started doing a whole lot of tests to find out what he had. They gave him narcotics to calm the pain down because it hurt so much. The doctors decided to admit him for observation and I wanted to stay with him but they didn't let me because they said that visitors were not allowed on that unit. Then my oldest son came to see me at the hospital and took me to his house to spend the night. I couldn't sleep there because I was so worried about him. I stayed awake and at sunrise I asked that my son take me back to the hospital to be with him. When we got to his room all the nurses told me that his pain had calmed down and that he was looking better. After that, they let us see him and we waited there for the results from all the tests that they did. All of the sudden, one of the machines started to alarm and a lot of doctors and nurses arrived.

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One of them came up to us and took us out of the room so that they could work on him. They explained something to me but I don't know what they said because I was so scared about what was happening. You could see a little bit of what was happening in the room and all the people that were around him. They put that thing on him, that thing that they use to resuscitate the patient. Honestly I don't know how much time passed. I waited there with my son and we didn't know what was happening because it was all so fast. After that they told me that he had died....that they could not save him.

Provider: Again, Martha, I'm terribly sorry for your loss. While I didn't know Henry, I'm certain that you loved him very much...that your whole family loved him very much. I'd like to ask how you are. Sometimes family members tell me that they are unable to eat or sleep after the loss of a loved one. What about you, Martha. Are you eating and sleeping OK?

Wife: Yes.

Provider: That's good. I know it can be difficult. Is there anything that is bothering you in particular?

Wife: Well, one question that I have is that I can't remember things. I forget everything and then my kids get mad at me because they say I'm not paying attention and they get tired of repeating things. I don't know what's happening to me but I explain to them I'm not doing it on purpose. We fight like that all the time and I feel bad.

Provider: Well, Martha, forgetfulness is common after a traumatizing event. It's our body's way of healing itself because it's trying to erase the pain and suffering.

Wife: Is it always going to be like that? I forget where I put my keys or that I have clothes in the washer. I can't concentrate on anything and I'm scatterbrained.

Provider: While what you describe is common, it depends on the individual just how long it lasts. You will not be like this forever. You need time to heal. Is there anything else you would like to talk about today?

Wife: No.

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Provider: I'm aware of some programs that offer support groups. Would you be interested in something like that?

Wife: I don't know.

Provider: Well, if I understand correctly, you do not have a strong support system in the area, and much of your family is still in your home country. Sometimes it helps to talk about your feelings, and that is what a support group can offer you – a place to talk. Here is a pamphlet in your language about some of the programs in your area. If you decide you're interested, you can call and make arrangements to attend. You wouldn't have to go to every meeting; only when you feel like talking would help. I believe they might have some support groups in your language, too.

Wife: That's fine. . . .

Provider: Unless there's anything else, Martha, that's all I wanted to discuss with you today. Like I said, I just wanted to check in and see how you were doing. I appreciate you coming in to see me. You can call me anytime you'd like to talk. Here is my number. Just leave me a message with your name, and I will return your call with an interpreter.

Wife: That's fine, thanks. .

Provider: Thank you.