

## GRIEF SUPPORT WEBSITES

### Actively Moving Forward

Grief support for college students

[www.activelymovingforward.org](http://www.activelymovingforward.org)

### Compassionate Friends

Healing resources

[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

### FriendGrief

For those who have lost friends

[www.friendgrief.com](http://www.friendgrief.com)

### HelloGrief.org

Online forums for support discussion

[www.hellogrief.org](http://www.hellogrief.org)

### The Grief Toolbox

Articles and other grief resources

[www.thegrieftoolbox.com](http://www.thegrieftoolbox.com)

### Suicide Awareness Voices of Education

For those bereaved by others' suicide

[www.suicidegrief.save.org](http://www.suicidegrief.save.org)



## A GUIDE FOR CHAPTERS

AFTER THE DEATH OF A BROTHER



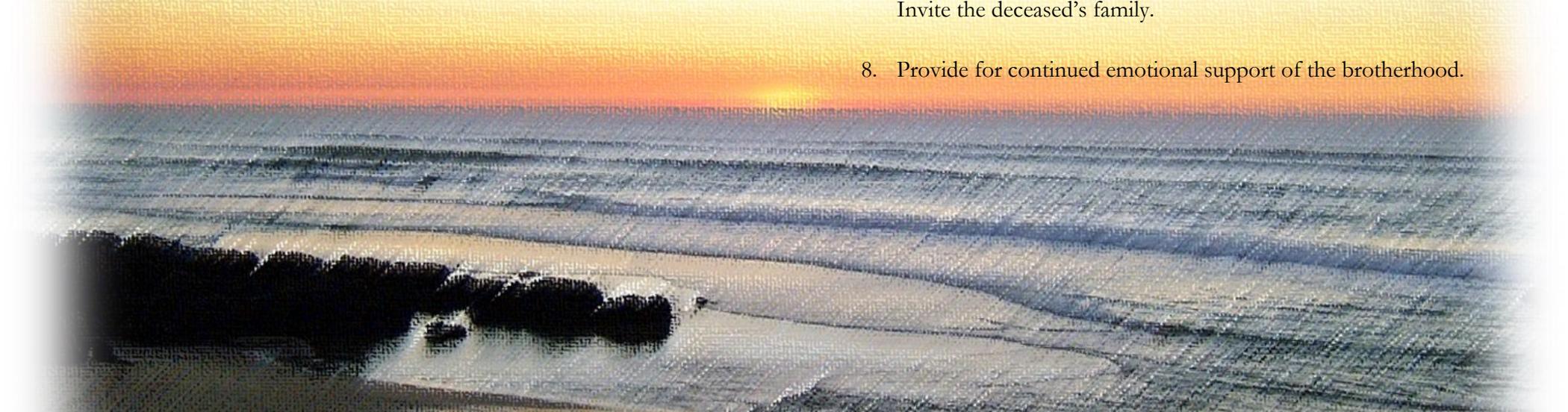
# W

hen a student or recent alumnus passes away, it can be one of the most difficult experiences a brother may ever have to deal with. Many active brothers are still fairly young and may not have had to experience the death of a loved one in their personal lives. Losing one of our brothers is usually unforeseen and tragic. It's important that we know how we should handle this terrible situation.

This guide is intended to address the death of a brother in the context of death outside of a risk-management event. Deaths that could potentially be construed to be the result of action or negligence on the chapter's part or an individual brother's part should be referred *immediately* to the Region Director.

## The steps, in brief:

1. Take care of yourself and your immediate emotional needs.
2. Using a chain of command, contact those who need to know in an appropriate manner.
3. Designate a single point of contact between the chapter and the deceased's family.
4. Communicate the death to the chapter.
5. Discuss with the deceased's family if Alpha Phi Omega will have any involvement in the funeral/memorial service.
6. Attend the visitation or funeral, if possible, and appropriate.
7. Conduct the memorial ritual for the members of the chapter. Invite the deceased's family.
8. Provide for continued emotional support of the brotherhood.



When you first receive the news of a brother's death, take care of yourself and your immediate emotional needs.

Receiving the news of a brother's death is usually shocking and always difficult. Regardless of whether you are the first or four hundredth person to be informed, you should:

- Take a moment to absorb the news
- Get in touch with your emotions – it's okay to cry, feel sadness and/or anger – this is perfectly normal
- **Call and talk to someone** if you need emotional support.  
(Don't text, call!)



*"We are healed of a suffering only by experiencing it to the full."*

There is much to be gained from talking with people who have been through what you are going through.

Your support people will suggest that you attend a support group, but only you can determine when and if it will be for you. Read pamphlets, ask questions, take a support person with you at first, whatever will make it possible to check out the group. You will find local bereavement groups through hospice, cancer support organizations, hospitals, or other organizations. Survivors of suicide groups are available in some areas.

**If you experience thoughts of harming yourself or others, seek help immediately from any of these resources:**

Call 911 or go to your emergency room

Call a local crisis hotline/ mental health center

Call 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)

Or 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)

Or 1-800-799-4TTY for TTY access

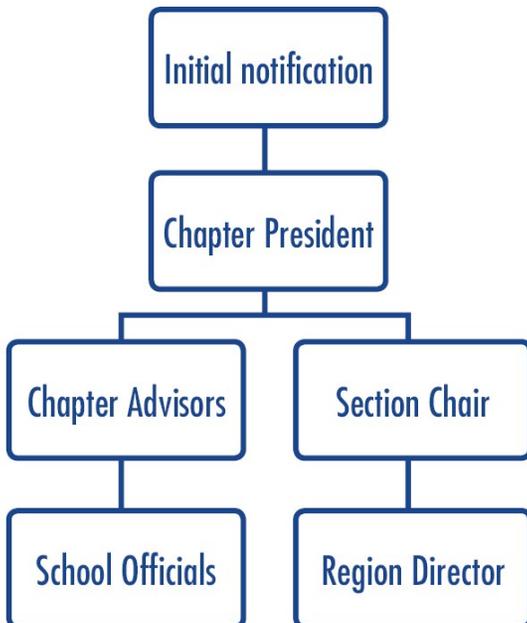
Call a friend or family member to help you find a resource. Be sure to follow through with the help that is recommended for you. **One tragedy is enough.**

## Contacting others in an appropriate manner

We build our organization on the concept of brotherhood, so one of our first actions in times of stress or crisis is to reach out to others for support.

This will be a trying time for many, so we'll not want to overwhelm people with too much contact, too many questions or requests, and too much inaccurate information.

- A certain chain of command should exist.
- Information should be kept simple.
- Don't be afraid to say "I don't know."



### Student

Students should inform the Chapter President as soon as possible.

### Chapter President

The President should inform the Section Chair and the Chapter Advisors. The President should also start preparing some sort of notification for the entire chapter (refer to step 4).

### Section Chair

The Section Chair should contact the Region Director right away. Once this has been completed, they can start informing other chapters within the section, as well as informing other sections.

### Chapter Advisor

A Campus Advisor should inform college or university officials.

### Region Director

The Region Director should contact the National Office or National Executive Director.

Designate a single point of contact between the chapter and the family.

An Advisor should consult with the Chapter President to appoint a single point of contact between the family and the chapter.

It's important that the chapter understand the difficulty that the family is enduring and not overwhelm them with many brothers expressing their condolences. There will be a time and a place for that, but it's not immediate. Therefore, only one brother should be the liaison between the deceased's family and the chapter.

This contact should determine the family's wishes regarding communication. Some things to consider:

- Have they heard of Alpha Phi Omega?
- Are there brothers they are familiar with in the chapter, etc.?
- How much involvement do they want the Fraternity to have in the funeral/memorial arrangements?

Initial Communication to the Chapter

It's important that all of our Brothers be made aware of what has happened in a timely manner. Timely communication will limit rumors or hearsay.

The notification should be kept simple and contain only the facts that are known. It should also request that the Brothers to not contact the family directly, unless they are *VERY* close to the family. A simple email may be an appropriate start.

*“[GREEK NAME] Chapter of Alpha Phi Omega is sad to announce the passing of Brother [NAME]. We offer our deepest sympathy to the brothers of [GREEK NAME] Chapter at [SCHOOL NAME] on the loss of a beloved brother and student. In sorrow, we mourn his/her death. In gratitude, we embrace those around us. In sympathy, we reach out to those who grieve. Our hearts are with you and his/her family in this difficult time. To respect the privacy of our brother and his/her family, those wishing to express their condolences should contact the Chapter President, [NAME] at [E-MAIL]”*

Discuss with the deceased's family if Alpha Phi Omega will have any involvement in the funeral/memorial service.

Be aware that the family will be enduring tremendous grief and remember to put their needs first. Do not impose upon them in any way.

With few exceptions, brothers should not ask the family for any favors at this time. Unless they give permission, you should not use their home as a place to meet with other brothers, etc. Those traveling to the funeral should arrange their own travel and lodging.

It is a stressful time for the family and the chapter must allow them space to grieve in their own way. Please respect their loss. Act maturely and represent your chapter well.



If possible, the designated family liaison should discuss with them some of the following topics:

- Will Alpha Phi Omega have any involvement in the funeral/memorial services?
- Is it okay to sing the Toast Song together at the visitation? (in the presence of the deceased, in a private room, in the parking lot, etc.)
- Will the deceased wear a service pin? Do we need to supply a service pin?
- Will the chapter send flowers or meet whatever wishes the family sets forth (donation, etc.). If so, the President or an

Attend the visitation/funeral, if possible, and appropriate.

Some brothers may not have experienced the death of a loved one, so this may be their first experience with attending a funeral and/or visitation. Here is a brief guide on funeral attendance for Western cultures.

## Visitation

### Dress

Brothers should wear at least business casual dress at all visitations. Wearing your service pin will help distinguish you as a brother.

### Expressing your condolences

Be sure to visit with the deceased's family. Most often they want to hear your happy memories; tell them appropriate stories about their loved one.

### Toast Song

If appropriate, it should be sung towards the end of visitation, as things are winding down and attendees are thinning out, perhaps even conducted in a separate room or outside.

### Professionalism

Stay appropriate and remember the family's wishes.



## Funeral

### Dress

Brothers should wear semi-formal dress at all funerals. This is similar to what you may wear to a professional job interview. Wearing your service pin will help distinguish you as a brother.

### Attendance

Sit with other brothers as appropriate for support

### Service

There may be a mass or church service. There may or may not be an opportunity to speak about the departed brother.

### Professionalism

Be on your absolute best behavior.

### Graveside service (immediately following funeral)

## Conduct the memorial ritual for the members of the chapter and invite the deceased's family.

The chapter may opt to conduct a memorial ritual for the brother. This event should be held on campus, accessible to all, following the script from the Alpha Phi Omega ritual book and should be organized by the President and/or an Advisor.

### Who should attend

Anyone who wishes to pay their respects is definitely welcomed. If the family wishes to attend, they should be invited. Keep their involvement in mind when scheduling the memorial service. Incorporation of the Alpha Phi Omega ceremony into a larger, campus memorial is acceptable.

### When should it be held

Ideally, wait about 2-3 weeks after the death. The ritual could be done at the visitation if requested by the family. If many people are traveling to the service (from family, section or region), you may want to schedule the event on a weekend afternoon, otherwise a weeknight could work well.

A fellowship event should follow immediately after the memorial service. This can be a meal or snacks, but brothers should break bread together. The healing process needs to begin. Brothers could visit a favorite restaurant, watch a favorite movie of the deceased, share memories of the brother or simply talk to each other.

### Supplies for the ritual:

- Typed scripts of the ritual that are already personalized for the deceased brother
- Five candles – one white, three blue and one gold
- Candlestick holders
- Matches or a lighter for the candles
- Tablecloth
- Photo of the deceased and a personal item
- Chapter or fraternity banner
- Words and music to the Toast Song (for any non-brothers in attendance) and to any other music being played at the ritual.

The white candle represents the deceased brother and should be brand new. This candle should be presented to the family, if appropriate.

### Notes on conducting the Memorial Ritual

- Adapt the ritual to the individual brother. Type a script on one page for each speaker. Do NOT work out of the ritual book.
- Pre-select speakers a few days before. They need to be able to get through the ritual without breaking down. Consider asking the speakers to dress up a bit.
- Pre-select one or two brothers for prepared remarks. Not to give a eulogy, but to share happy memories and meaningful thoughts.
- Consider flowers and/or music for the venue.
- You may or may not want to have an opportunity to allow anyone who wishes to speak. This can be very emotional if not handled well. It can also drag out the service too long.
- Bring tissues for tears. Lots of them.
- When singing the Toast Song at the end of the ritual, be sure to leave a break in the circle in memory of the deceased brother.

### A typical ritual and memorial service program:

- Gathering (music playing)
- Greeting
- Explanation of the ritual for non-brothers
- Conduct the ritual
- Fellowship

### *If the university is involved in the service:*

- Gathering (music playing)
- Greeting
- Invocation (if appropriate)
- Remarks by the university
- Remarks by other organizations/students
- Explanation of the ritual for non-brothers
- Conduct the ritual
- Remarks by APO brothers
- Music as appropriate
- Fellowship

## Provide for the continued emotional support of the brotherhood.

We all grieve in different ways. This may be the first time some of our brothers have lost someone close to them, so be there for each other and understand that grief and mourning will be different for each brother.

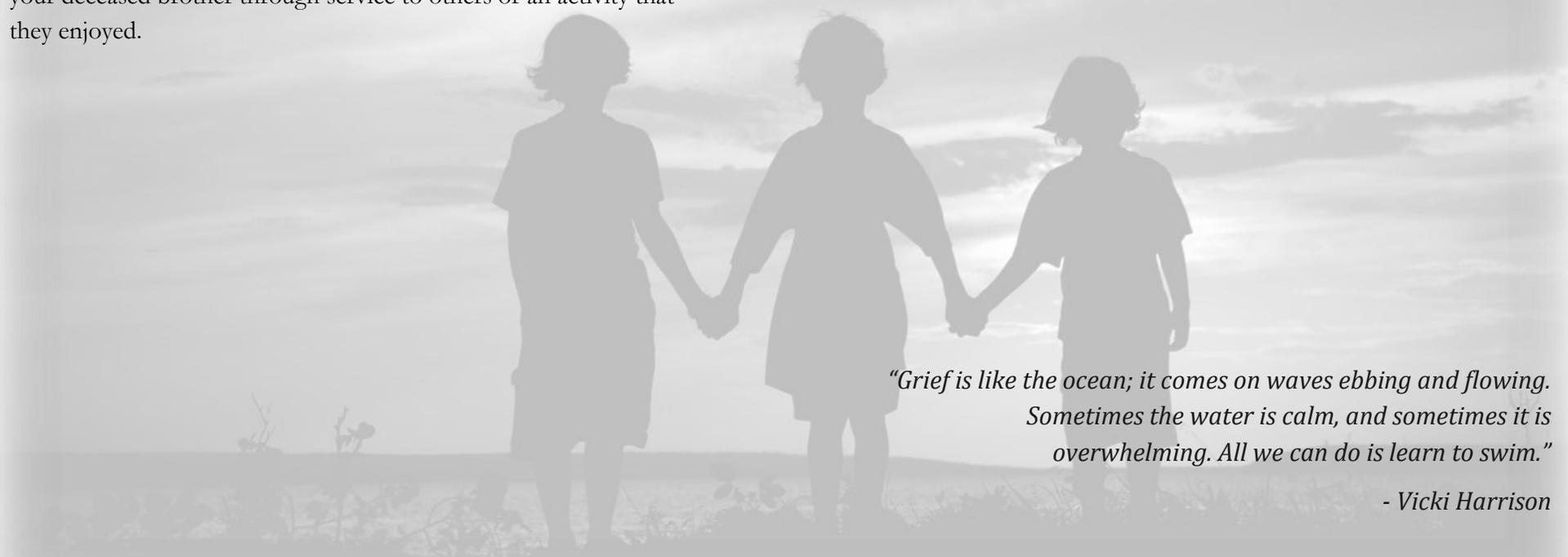
Build and promote community to support each other. Most of this can be accomplished within the chapter. The best thing we can do for each other is to simply be there.

Encourage each other to open up about the grief. Communicate to each other that you want to be part of the grieving process, and that you are comfortable listening to their pain. Honor your deceased brother through service to others or an activity that they enjoyed.

Watch brothers for the warning signs of complicated grief: self-harm and/or a lack of coping. Tell someone if you think a brother needs help. Advisors and Chapter Presidents should monitor social media for any signs of self-harm.

An Advisor and the Chapter President should find school resources about grief and counseling and get the word out to the chapter. There are professionals available to help. As much as we are great shoulders to cry on and want to help in many ways, we're not professionals at this.

A list of resources should be compiled and shared with the chapter. If it is deemed helpful, a campus resource could be present at the memorial ritual to offer suggestions and information.



*"Grief is like the ocean; it comes on waves ebbing and flowing. Sometimes the water is calm, and sometimes it is overwhelming. All we can do is learn to swim."*

*- Vicki Harrison*