

Information for Witnesses, Family and Friends. Attending Hearings at the Coroners Court of Victoria: Impact of Exposure to Trauma & Self Care

Attending court hearings can be emotionally demanding for witnesses, family, and friends. During hearings at the Coroners Court of Victoria, the facts and circumstances of a reportable death are revisited and examined by a coroner. This includes the examination of information through oral evidence of witnesses and exhibits (e.g., audio visual material, photographs).

Impact of exposure to trauma

It is common for people who have been affected by a traumatic event to experience a range of responses when re-exposed to the details. These responses can be expected even if the event occurred many years ago. The impact of trauma can be emotional, cognitive and or physical.

Emotions	Thinking	Physical
Feeling sad	Difficulty concentrating	Tiredness
Feeling overwhelmed	Racing thoughts	Agitation
Feeling angry	Feeling detached	Nausea
	Flashbacks & intrusive thoughts	

Although responses to trauma are normal, and usually settle with time, it is important to practice self-care and to consider access to support to assist you to manage these responses and the experience of discomfort. Self-care can include reminding yourself that you deserve care and reaching out to your support people for care.

Self-care suggestions

When attending a hearing, it can be helpful to develop a self-care plan.

Contact the Family Liaison Team to discuss what to expect



Contact Court Network who can accompany you during the hearing



Take time out for some gentle exercise



Bring a support person



Prepare food in advance



Mindfulness/ breathing techniques can help calm your body and mind



Expect to be tired. Give yourself time & space to rest after the hearing



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Coroners Court
of Victoria

When attending a court hearing, you could consider bringing a support person on the day or referring to the Court Network volunteers. The Court's Family Liaison Officers can assist with introducing you to the Court Network volunteers, provide you with information about counselling supports that you can access, and share practical information about attending the Court.

Please contact the Court, 1300 309 519 or email flo@courts.vic.gov.au if you would like to speak with a Family Liaison Officer.

Support lines



CourtNetwork

Court Network is a free confidential community service provided by volunteers for all court users in Victoria: victims, witnesses, accused, family and friends.

Ph. 1800 571 239 <https://courtnetwork.com.au>



Griefline

Griefline works with anyone experiencing grief and loss across Australia, inclusive of remote, regional, rural and metropolitan regions.

Ph: 1300 845 745 <https://griefline.org.au/get-help/>



LifeLine

Crisis support, suicide prevention and mental health support services

Ph: 13 11 14 <https://www.lifeline.org>



Beyond Blue

Depression, anxiety and related disorders

Ph: 1300 22 4636 <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>

Online resources

<https://toolkit.lifeline.org.au/topics/trauma/help-right-now-for-trauma>