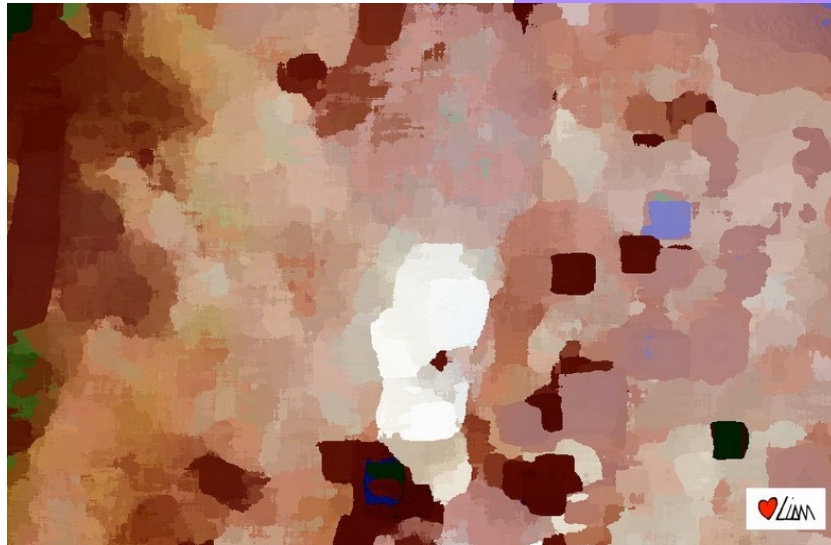


“A day at a time
An hour at a time
A minute at a time”

Grief and the Courts

I am so sorry for *your loss*



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written by gwendolyn broadmore

- what to do when a loved one has died due to an unlawful killing
- first edition - november 2008

Dedication

For Liam



In dedication to and
gratitude for the

LIFE
of
Liam Spencer Broadmore

November 27, 1966 † October 12, 2005.

Forever Cherished
Forever Loved
Forever Missed

A Word From the Author



Land's End, Point du Raz, Brittany (2002) by Liam Broadmore

A Word From the Author

This booklet has been painfully inspired
From our personal experiences after the
Killing of our dearly loved son, Liam.
These words come from the heart of a bereaved mum,
Not a professional in either the legal or therapeutic field.
With this in mind, I sincerely encourage you to gather information
From as many reliable sources as you comfortably can handle.

The opinions expressed within are **mine** alone; they do not necessarily
reflect the opinions of the agency from which you received this booklet.

I pray I have shone a glimmer of light on your long and anguished
Journey. If I have helped you, I have helped myself as well.

Together we can make it.
Our son believed in the redemptive power of love.

I wish you hope
I wish you love
I wish you strength

Please do not give up!

Sincerely,

Gwendolyn Broadmore (bereaved mum of Liam)

Acknowledgments

I am grateful for the love and support
 Of my family and friends.
 Thank you from the bottom of my heart!
 To my husband, Erwin Hoerd,
 You give me reason, love and strength.
 Our therapist, Beverley Ogus, your compassionate
 Guidance and wisdom has been a Godsend.
 To my inspiring helpmates, whose spiritual hearts and
 artists' vision have made the impossible-possible.
 Many thanks to the helping hands of
 Bereaved Families of York Region
 And Evergreen Hospice, Markham.



Caribbean Moment, Key West Florida 1986 by Liam Broadmore

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Grief and the Courts

Grief often is exacerbated and complicated when the courts and legal systems are involved.

Although everyone's grief is unique, there are some commonalities which exist.

While I share a few of my thoughts and experiences with you, I want to emphasize that each situation is different; nevertheless, I hope that for a time it will feel as if we are holding each other's hand.



Pyrenees Sunrise, Costa Brava, Spain (1997) by Liam Broadmore

I am very sorry for your loss.

Do Not Hurt Yourself or Anyone Else

In these difficult times, remember that professional guidance is there to help you to function through your pain.

I offer you two rules to keep in mind:

- **Do not hurt yourself.**
- **Do not hurt anyone else.**

During our dark nights of the soul, even these two rules represent a challenge to live by. Your life has been irrevocably and painfully altered. But gently and ever so slowly, day-by-day, you may come to appreciate some value in what remains.

There are no time-lines for this path of yours. For many of us our grief journey will last a lifetime. And while it is doubtful that we ever truly get over the trauma of a loved one's unlawful killing, I believe that with compassionate support and persistent and intentional grief work, we can discover a way to live with our pain. I hope that eventually we each navigate our way toward meaning.

You are stronger than you ever wanted to be. You can and will prevail! In this ongoing nightmare, congratulate yourself for getting through each day. Know this, you **can** do it.

Honour yourself, honour your loved ones and keep faith that **love never dies**.

Please, always remember that you have a right to be here.

Taking Care of Yourself

It becomes essential for you to be gentle with yourself and to rely on those who can best provide the support and understanding you need.

We live in a society that is largely in denial about death. Many people have trouble realizing that there are no timelines for grief. Some dear ones meaning well might want to “fix you”. They may have already moved on and it may be hard for them to comprehend you are not who you were before this tragedy.

These are **very early** days for you. It may take years for you to figure out who you are and how you will continue from here. Be patient and kind with yourself.

Attempt to express your true emotions to those you trust. Unfortunately you as the bereaved will very often need to ask for what you require.

Sadly, it is possible that some people may intimate that our loved one somehow contributed to his/her own demise. These painful surprises and disappointments blind-side us emotionally. It is best to stay calm and as hard as it is, understand that they simply don't know what they are talking about. Please be assured that no one deserves to be unlawfully killed and most especially not your loved one!

Remember you deserve the right to be yourself. There is no grief greater than yours.



Low Tide, Fouesnant, Brittany (2000) by Liam Broadmore

About Grief

Grief without outside interference or additional complications is already a long and difficult journey. Often referred to as grief work, it is the hardest work we will ever do. Nevertheless, we are well advised to do this work; otherwise we risk being frozen in pain.

When a loved one has died due to unlawful killing, many of our feelings of anguish and stomach wrenching nausea incorporate shock, disbelief, confusion, despair, denial, anger, guilt, yearning and sadness, to name a few. These confusing emotions are common to most bereaved people. But you will most likely experience more extremes in your reactions.

It is very possible your period of shock will last longer and your self-confidence be greatly diminished. As well, in these horrific circumstances, there exists a part of us almost in suspended animation. We are awaiting the incarceration and ultimate sentencing of those responsible for our loss.

In the midst of this intense pain, there exists an illusion that once justice has been served we will be able to move forward. These are normal feelings. It is difficult to assimilate that the only equitable & true justice, for us, is the return of our loved one; and as such, whatever the courts decide, we will have lost.

As well our mourning period is often delayed and may not recommence until a legal resolution is achieved. Many professionals claim that our brain tries to protect us, by allowing only certain realities in bit by bit, as we regain some strength.

Certainly in our grief, it is natural to hope and wish for relief from our sadness. I do not mean this in a pathological way, but another letdown occurs when we finally admit to ourselves that no matter what the verdict is, our loved one is still dead.

Getting Help

Let us return to the beginning when you first heard this earth shattering news. Most of us have no experience with or knowledge of the criminal justice system.

Now, you are most vulnerable and even ordinary situations provoke fear. It is not unusual for your exposure to these extra-ordinary traumas to compound your anxiety and dread. Once you reestablish the ability to literally breathe, please reach out for help. Your family doctor is a good place to start.

Then perhaps because of your circumstances, contact The Victim/Witness Assistance Program, whose personnel can provide information about the legal process and give you additional suggestions of available services. It can be complicated for you to absorb much in your distraught and weakened condition but hopefully a family member or a friend can assist you with this. Please be advised that some of the services available free to you are time sensitive. You may want to make your applications as soon as you can.

A frightening journey lies ahead and although the support of family and friends is invaluable, eventually you may consider expanding your support system to include, as example, a grief therapist or psychotherapist and/or your place of worship and/or self-help groups, such as your local branch of Bereaved Families and/or your local Hospice, to highlight a few.

You will sense what feels right for you.

At these devastating times we really can use all the help we can get. Although it takes courage and strength to reach out, you can do it one step at a time!

Here are some resources you can turn to:



Canadian Shield, Kawartha Lakes, Ontario (2002) by Liam Broadmore

Another Opportunity

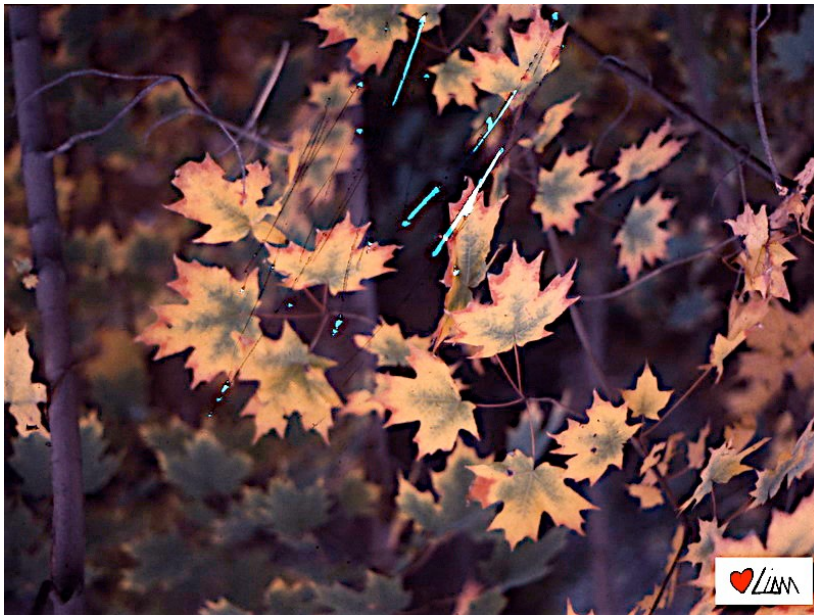
Each situation has differences but you will likely have another opportunity to participate in the legal process.

Victim Impact Statements

For example, prior to the sentencing of those convicted, close friends and family of the deceased victim are usually allowed to prepare and present individual Victim Impact Statements, thereby putting forth the impact of each devastating loss both to the court and to the ones responsible for this tragedy.

These statements can have a positive influence on sentencing. Regardless-at the very least you have grabbed the chance publicly to express the magnitude of your loss and to stand up for your loved one. I encourage you to do your best. Painful though everything has been and continues to be, your participation may alleviate some of your feelings of helplessness. We cannot know what results our efforts will have but it is healing and positive to try.

- The courtroom introduces additional and unnatural **stress** for you. When the criminal courts are involved, you may feel as if your grief and anxiety are greatly magnified. It is not uncommon to have conflict within your own family. There are no magic answers but it is certain you already have an abundance of pain. At this impossible time, it is an easier path if you can somehow manage to treat each other with compassion and kindness.
- Finally, pat yourself on the back that you are participating as best you can. You deserve sincere congratulations for your courage and determination!



Autumn Spider Web, Muskoka, Ontario (1999) by Liam Broadmore

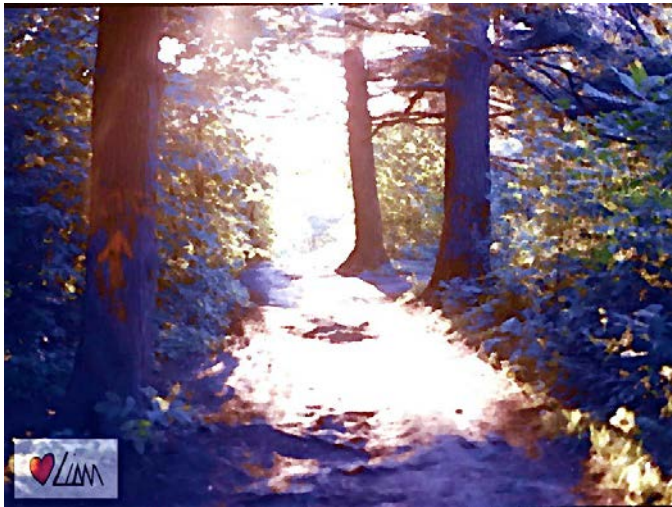
Resources	And How They Can Help
Your family doctor	Assessment of your physical and emotional condition / medical suggestions and remedies and referrals accordingly.
The Victim/Witness Assistance Program	Provide information about the legal process and additional suggestions of available services.
Family members, friends	Emotional support. Help with sorting through the available resources.
Grief therapist, psychotherapist	Objective emotional support, and strategies for dealing with grief.
Your place of worship	Spiritual support.
Self-Help Groups (Such as Bereaved Families Groups)	Strategies for dealing with grief, and shared experiences.

About the Media

When a crime has been committed, the police and The Victim/Witness Assistance personnel may be our first contact. But in certain situations, you could also receive inquiries from the newspapers and other media.

To give commentary is a personal choice. Just be aware that you are vulnerable in your shock and despair; it is wise to be circumspect. It could complicate your grief to be misquoted or to say something you later regret.

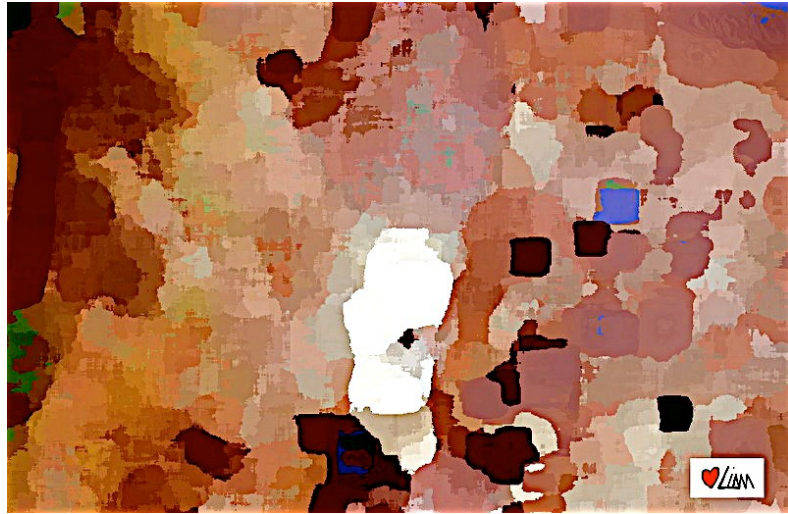
At this painful time, *choose your own path carefully.*



Climax Forest, Kawartha Lakes, Ontario (1992) by Liam Broadmore

A Few Tips About Court:

- If you dress your best, you may feel more in control.
- Be forewarned that seeing the alleged killer and his/her family members in the courtroom can initiate a wild range of emotions in you. It is an extremely tough experience. Lean on your friends and family; remind yourself that you are in the courtroom on behalf of your loved one. You are actively participating in the hope for justice.
- Court language is confusing and disturbing in your anguished state of mind. The Crown and The Defense may rarely refer to each other directly by name but instead as "my friend". Unsettling as this is for you, it is simply court-protocol and does not reflect the relationship between them.
- The defense attorney may refer to your loved one in a very impersonal way. This can feel quite disrespectful to you. Remember, the Defense is representing the accused. As hard as this may seem you can somehow manage your distress, one moment at a time with help. If you become overwhelmed, quietly leave the courtroom for a greatly needed respite.
- Meetings in Judge's chambers between The Crown and The Defense may surprise you and cause you to worry about "backroom justice".
- Avail yourself of opportunities to speak privately with The Crown. You are entitled to clarification. Ask the questions which burn in your heart regarding justice for your loved one. Speak up if you don't understand.
- Be aware that plea-bargaining is a reality of our justice system. Learn as much as you can and give your opinions. Ask to be advised ahead of time. Things are difficult enough for you, better not to be caught off guard.



Canadian Shield Abstract, Kawartha Lakes, Ontario (2005) by Liam Broadmore

Coping With the Legal Proceedings

These legal processes often take a very long time, definitely months and possibly years. Realize that you are likely too shattered to cope with immediate attendance in court, so a certain passage of time is somewhat good.

And if sometimes you feel as if you could jump right out of your own skin, please understand, this does not mean you are going crazy. Some doctors and therapists refer to our trauma as post-traumatic stress disorder. I'm here to tell you that although it is a very hard job you can do it one day at a time and one hour at a time and one minute at a time.

Attending Court

Finally when the opportunity arises to attend court, be prepared to bring along people you can lean on. Please ask for support. Criminal court can be an agonizing and intimidating experience for you.

You And the Criminal Prosecution Process

When criminal prosecution is involved, to a large extent the proceedings and the results are out of our hands. This can be agonizing, frustrating and anger provoking for you, the victim. There are some small contributions you can make which may aid your peace of mind. In your distress it could seem that little matters besides your loss; these feelings are understandable. But eventually you may wish to know as much as possible about what happened, when, where, why and who. You are incomparable in how you are able to cope with your situation but being forearmed with information can be helpful in the long run.

You are a victim and as such are entitled to meetings with the police and Crown (in Canada The Crown Attorney prosecutes the accused on behalf of the government). You have a right to ask questions and to receive information as to what lies ahead.

Hard to Cope

When the criminal courts are involved, it is not unusual for you to feel as if your grief and anxiety are magnified a thousand fold. If these waves of sadness make it excruciatingly difficult for you to cope, realize you are living out your worst nightmare. Take a deep breath and please reach out to your family and friends.

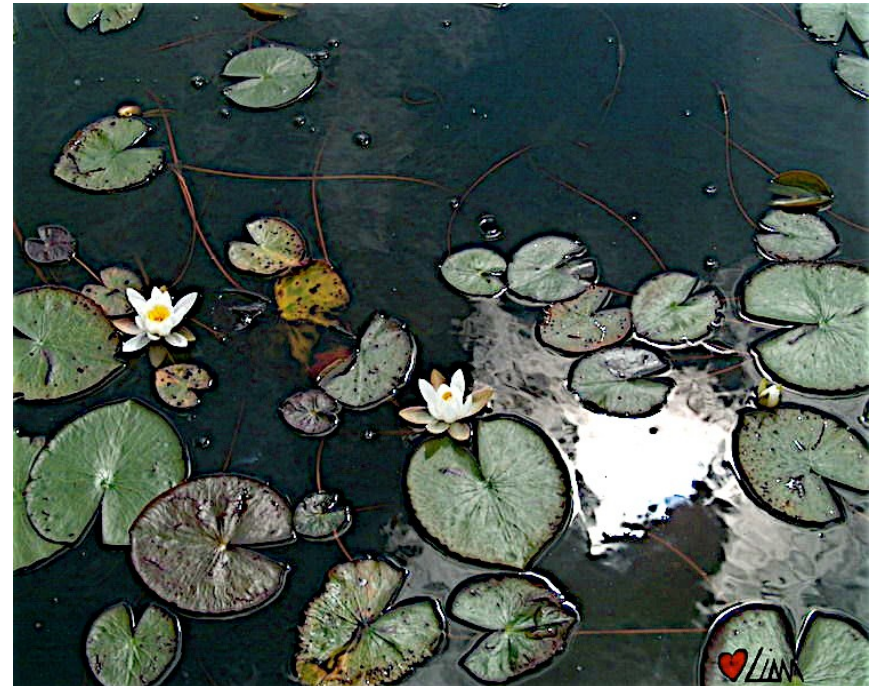


After The Storm, Head Lake, Ontario (1999) by Liam Broadmore

I hope the following pages will shed some light on what lies ahead. Perhaps this will lessen your feelings of helplessness in the midst of this chaos and pain.

Your Meetings with the Authorities

- You may have a sense that the police and Crown are not telling “the whole story”. Just be aware that it could be necessary to their investigations to keep certain details private, for now. It is also possible that there are some realities you are not ready to face, just yet. It is not unusual for you to teeter back and forth between wanting to cover your ears and demanding every scrap of information. Be patient with yourself and persistent according to your own comfort level.
- There can be times when you feel that your loved one, although the victim, is in the spotlight in a negative fashion. All of a sudden it seems as if he/she needs defending. As victims ourselves, we can be hyper sensitive and may not have the ability to perceive each situation accurately. Whenever you experience these emotions, you may also find a magnification of your grief and also your anger, possibly even to the point of rage. This is not uncommon, but for your own well-being, it is best to seek professional help.
- It is not easy to know what will ease our troubled hearts. But prior to your initial meeting with the authorities, you may wish to prepare a presentation all about your loved one, something memorable to leave with the police and The Crown. For example, you can prepare copies of special photographs and letters of tribute. It is a way of assuring in a positive way that your beloved person becomes very real, personal and in the face of those dealing with the case. You can achieve a sense that you are standing-in as he/she is not able to do so and this is a good thing.



Waterlilies, Head Lake, Ontario (2004) by Liam Broadmore